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# UNIVERSAL BELIEFS;

OR,

## THE GREAT CONSENSUS.

BY

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AUTHOR OF "ECCE CŒLUM," ETC.

Veteres opiniones sunt jam usque ab heroicis ductæ temporibus, eaque et Populi Romani, et omnium gentium firmatæ CONSENSU.

CICERO.

Left Himself without a witness?
Who could dream so drear a thing
As that God, the Wise and Righteous,
Would the blind to judgment bring?

ANON.

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## THE GREAT CONSENSUS

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# PREFACE.

I. It is hoped that no reader of the following pages will do as some have done—will infer from the fact that all systems of religion have some good in them that they are all equally good, or even that it cannot reasonably be claimed that while one is from above all the others are from beneath. This certainly would be very poor logic. A system may have some good elements, and yet as a whole be very bad. Truth is not such a Midas as to turn all it touches into gold. It may, practically, be cancelled, and more than cancelled, by errors closely bound up with it; just as sundry excellent soldiers in an army may not prevent it from being a terrible scourge; just as sundry good traits in a citizen may not prevent his becoming a public nuisance; and just as sundry chemical elements, in themselves wholesome, may not prevent the compound to which they belong from acting as a deadly poison. The non-Christian religions are poisons, despite the good elements they contain.

II. It is also hoped that every reader of the following pages will find in them a sufficient an-

swer to a common excuse for neglecting personal religion. The neglecter points to the number of Christian denominations. "How widely they differ among themselves as to what is believed! With what confidence and zeal each sect defends its own peculiarities! The very same passage of Scripture has exactly opposite meanings in the thought of different people, many of whom are very intelligent and conscientious."

So the man professes himself perplexed. He does not know what to think. How can a plain man like himself see his way through such a fog of religious notions! Is he not excusable for feeling uncertain when beaten about by so many conflicting winds of doctrine?

This is the way men sometimes talk when urged towards personal religion by some Christian friend. What answer does he make? Of course he does not pretend to deny that considerable differences of religious opinion exist among even intelligent and good men, and that these differences are often emphasized with no little heat. Perhaps he inquires whether his friends propose to have no opinion whatever in science or art or education or politics because there is a margin of debatable and debated ground about each. But certainly he proceeds to point out that the differences among the chief Christian denom-

inations relate mostly to *secondary* matters; that in regard to matters of the most primary and fundamental character the sects are perfectly agreed. Nay, on examination, he finds that he can go still farther, and can call attention to the fact that not only are all the great Christian sects agreed on certain main points of religious belief, but that the same is true of all the religions and nations of the world. That there is a realm of superhuman beings; that at the head of this realm stands a personal Being who is wonderfully above all others; that this supreme Person is active in human affairs; that worship, public and private, is to be paid to Him; that prayer may, in a large degree, secure from him the particular blessings asked for; that he has sent infallible messages to men; that men possess immortal souls; that such souls, though exceedingly sinful, can be saved as to both character and circumstances; and that the opportunity for such salvation does not extend beyond the present life—such doctrines are the common possession of mankind. They are a kind of universal currency. They are the heirlooms of the race. They defy the tooth of time. They survive all storms, all accidents, and even all depravities. No political or social or religious revolutions disturb them in the least. They underlie all governments, speak in all tongues, and

flourish in all climates. They have unrelaxing grip on all grades of faculty and culture and social position. In short, they seem as durable as human nature itself, and subject to no greater modifications.

Does one feel that a doctrine must be uncertain if it is respectably disputed? Would it take a stumbling-block out of his way to find a realm of religious belief in which practically all men are at home? Here is such a realm. Here is a sea on which one is *not* beaten about by conflicting winds of doctrine. All the winds are blowing, but they are all blowing in the same direction. Behold the unanimity you long for. See that it is as wide as the world. See that it relates to main things. If you are disposed to allow weight to the *dissensus*, should you not also allow weight to the mightier *consensus?* We are not now asking you to accept matters in dispute between Christians; we are only asking you to accept and suitably act on such doctrines as carry the faith not only of all Christendom, but also of all heathendom and of any other -dom under heaven. Believe with the unspeakable majority. And do more than that majority does—give us conduct to match. And when you have gotten so far you are not very far from CHRIST.

LYME, Conn.

# I. SUPERHUMAN BEINGS.

Εισὶ δὲ οὗτοὶ οἱ οὐδὲν ἄλλο οἰόμενοι εἶναι ἢ οὗ
ἂν δύνωνται απριξ τοῖν χεροῖν λαβέσθαι. PLATO.

Those are profane who think that nothing exists save what they can lay hold of with their hands.

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Nihil in omni mundo melius esse quam se cogitare, dementia est. CICERO.

It is madness to think that there is nothing in the whole universe better than ourselves.

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To an innumerable company of angels. PAUL.

# UNIVERSAL BELIEFS.

## I. SUPERHUMAN BEINGS.

Our Scriptures speak of a class of personal beings called angels. They are described as superior to men, very numerous, immortal, generally invisible to us, exceedingly interested in human affairs, sharply divided into the two classes of good and bad. And the bad have a great chief, one of whose names is Satan, and from whose malice and activity men have much to fear.

The Mohammedan nations accept entire this Bible teaching. "The whole doctrine concerning angels, Mohammed and his disciples have borrowed from the Jews." Gabriel, Michael, Azrael, and Israfil stand at the head of the good angels, Eblis at the head of the bad. Both classes are very numerous. Beneath these are the genii, who live on the earth, are mortal and sinful like men, but are vastly stronger and wiser and more ethereal than ourselves. Both genii and angels are invisibly active in human affairs, and give us great occasion both to hope and to fear.

As to all the great polytheistic nations, they have substantially the same views. Their many gods are, in general, the equivalents of the Biblical angels and of the Moslem angels and genii. Among the ancients, the Greeks and Romans supposed the earth to be populous with superhuman beings. The waters, the forests, the mountains, the valleys, the air, the bowels of the earth, the heavenly bodies, were thought to be occupied by them in vast numbers. They were fauns, dryads, satyrs, naiads, dæmons, lares and penates, dii majores—a hundred names, standing for a realm of personal beings quite superior to men, undying, having large dealings with the world, though by us unseen, some mischievous and others benevolent.

And this is a fair specimen of how all known nations have believed from the earliest times down to the present. The popular imagination and faith, everywhere and always, have been saturated, not only with the idea of elves and fairies and gnomes and peris and obis and manitous, but also with the idea of a spiritual realm of far more dignified beings commonly invisible to men and superior to them—like Sorûsh and Mordâd and Beshter of the ancient Persians, or Al Ilihat of the ancient Arabs. Says Prof. Tiele, a careful modern inquirer, "No tribe or nation has yet

been met with destitute of belief in any higher beings, and travellers who asserted their existence have been afterwards refuted by facts." Beginning at the lowest class of living beings and ascending from terrace to terrace of dignity towards man, we find no class at which it is safe to stop and say, "This is the last and highest." When then we come, in the course of a long journey, to man, why should we say it? In the absence of all evidence to the contrary, would it not be rational and scientific to conclude that further ascent would continue the long experience of the past, and another still loftier terrace of life come into view? Will not the sun rise to-morrow, O ye who have known seventy years of sun-risings?

"But there is a break at man. After him the sight which has so long served us discovers nothing. No sense discovers anything. Man seems the last mile-stone. Utter vacuity appears beyond him. If there were another plane of being above us would it not appear?"

Certainly invisibility is no proof of non-existence. All the great natural forces are unseen. Who ever saw gravity or magnetism or chemical affinity? Also, no man versed in natural history doubts the existence of living beings so attenuated and ethereal as to be beyond our sight even when aided by the best instruments; just as

no such man doubts the existence of living bodies so small as to be beyond our most potential microscopes. Probably as large a realm of life is unseen from the effect of attenuation as from that of smallness. Plainly, vigor of life in no degree depends on the density of its body. The man who weighs the most per cubic inch is by no means the most likely to have the vital forces in greatest strength. These depend no more on density than they do on size; and as a gnat may be as intensely alive as an elephant, so a body tenuous to the point of invisibility by our sight, however aided, may be as thoroughly and powerfully living as anything within our view.

As it is altogether credible that there is a realm of life lying beyond our sense of sight, so it is altogether credible that there is such a realm lying beyond the sense of hearing, or any other sense; in fact, beyond all our senses. Distance, if nothing else, can defy and defeat them all. Things which when near can easily be noted may be removed so far from us into the endless abysses of space as to disappear altogether from the sphere of our observation. If it be a mote, a few inches of removal will answer; if it be a world, some hundreds of millions of miles may be necessary; but there is room enough out yonder to allow of the annihilation, so far as our senses are concerned,

of any object whatever. So the way is open for us to receive any positive evidence that may exist in favor of a realm of beings superior to man which no present senses of ours can discover.

Though such beings may be naturally without the range of our sense, they may be able to bring themselves, on occasion, within that range. They may be able to take on sensible forms; or, without their doing this, our senses may be so quickened and exalted as to pass their usual barriers and become aware of a new world. That both of these things have occurred, innumerable rumors, traditions, and seeming records testify. The air of all known times and countries is alive with such testimonies. Sometimes they are mere whispers—subtile hints and suggestions of facts rather than facts themselves—and sometimes they are loud magisterial voices that declare and that swear. Thus the Bible tells us in the way of sober narrative of many angelic appearances to men in forms easily discernible by human senses in their usual state, as well as of men whose eyes were specially anointed to see things otherwise invisible. The sacred books of other religions abound in similar accounts. The accounts are so many and so widely diffused, they come to us from so many quarters besides magic and spiritualism, and under so many forms and ways of verisimili-

tude, that we are moved to say, "Can it be that nothing of this is historical? Have we any history if we have not here at least some few shreds of it?"

Such considerations gather weight as we notice how they accord with the course of scientific discovery. Strange forms of life, widely different from us and from one another, and in some respects greatly superior to us, have been continually coming to light. They are stronger or swifter or hardier or keener-sighted than we are: some one or more faculties are astonishingly greater than ours. Why, then, should we be stumbled at the idea of a realm of angels? Why may not a race of beings exist in which all these special superiorities over us are combined? The discovery of such a race would be quite in the line of discoveries already made, and hardly more wonderful. We can well understand that if some day a curtain should rise, not thicker than that which once parted the later astronomy from our knowledge, or this Western Hemisphere from the Eastern, we should find ourselves face to face with that great spiritual world which the masses in all nations accept, which the Bible affirms, and with the idea of which all literatures are saturated.

"My dwelling had been situate beside
The myriads of a vast metropolis:

But now astonished I beheld, and lo!
There were more spirits than men, more habitants
Of the thin air than of the solid ground:
The firmament was quick with life. As when
The prophet's servant looked from Dothan forth
On Syria's thronging multitudes, and saw
The squadrons of the sky around the seer
Encamping, thus in numbers numberless
The hosts of darkness and of light appeared."

But one does not need to die in order to discover a realm of superhuman beings. He has only to lift instructed eyes to the evening firmament. There glitter many worlds far brighter and fairer than this, worlds which in size and beauty and splendid surroundings are as much beyond our earth as the most regal palace is beyond the most wretched hut. Now if mere nature made man, as some venture to say, where nature exists in her finer and riper forms we would naturally expect to find her nobler products. The nobler the parent the nobler the child; the greater the workman the greater the work. If a wise God made men and the worlds, and if men are the highest of his creatures, he doubtless has placed them in the noblest of the astronomical homes. It would be an unfitness and unreasonableness to do otherwise—to build a palace for a gnat and a hovel for a man. But, as a matter of fact, we find man occupying one of the humbler worlds. Hence we infer that he is *not* the highest of God's creatures,

but that the more splendid homes in the distant heavens are suitably allotted to the more splendid population. So, whether mere blind nature or a wise God is the author of the present scheme of things, we are entitled to believe in a realm of superhuman beings such as the Bible affirms, such as mankind at large have always taken for granted, and such as the principle of induction and the general course of scientific discovery suggest. As beyond our unaided sight there are many worlds much larger than our own, sweeping on grander orbits, shining with a more magnificent beam, and ruling with a more potential kingliness, so, we may well believe, in common with all nations, were our senses aided to pass a certain curtain, we should discover not merely a vast intelligent population, but multitudes of beings vastly superior to ourselves.

"Tell me," says Micromegas, an inhabitant of one of the planets of the great Dog Star, to the Secretary of the Academy of Sciences in the planet Saturn, at which he had just arrived in a journey through the heavens, "Tell me, how many senses have the men on your globe?" "We have seventy-two senses," answered the academician, "and we are every day complaining of the smallness of the number. Our imagination goes far beyond our wants. What are seventy-two senses!

and how pitiful a boundary, even for beings with such limited perceptions, to be cooped up within our ring and our eight moons! In spite of our curiosity, and in spite of as many passions as can result from six dozen senses, we find our hours hang very heavily on our hands and can always find time for yawning." "I can very well believe it," says Micromegas, "for in our globe we have very near one thousand senses, and yet with all these we feel continually a sort of listless inquietude and vague desire which are for ever telling us that we are nothing, and that there are beings infinitely nearer perfection. I have travelled a good deal in the universe. I have seen a good many beings far beneath us and many as much superior, but I have never had the good fortune to find any who had not more desires than real necessities to occupy their life. And, pray, how long may you Saturnians live, with your few senses?" continued the Sirian. "Ah, but a very short time indeed," said the little man of Saturn, with a sigh. "It is the same with us," said the traveller; "we are for ever complaining of the shortness of life. It must be a universal law of nature." "Alas," said the Saturnian, "we live only five hundred great revolutions of the sun (about fifteen thousand years of our counting). You see well that this is to die almost the mo-

ment one is born. Our existence is a point, our duration an instant, our globe an atom. Scarcely have we begun to pick up a little knowledge when death rushes in upon us before we can have acquired anything like experience. As for me, I cannot venture even to think of any project. I feel myself but like a drop of water in the ocean; and especially now when I look to you and to myself I really feel quite ashamed of the ridiculous appearance which I make in the universe." "If I did not know that you were a philosopher," replied Micromegas, "I should be afraid of distressing you when I tell you that our life is seven hundred times longer than yours. But what is even that? And when we come to the last moment, to have lived a single day and to have lived a whole eternity amounts to the very same thing. I have been in countries where they live a thousand times longer than with us, and I have always found them murmuring, just as we do ourselves. But you have seventy-two senses, and they must have told you something about your globe. How many properties has matter with you?" "If you mean *essential* properties," said the Saturnian, "without which our globe could not subsist, we count three hundred—extension, impenetrability, mobility, gravitation, divisibility, and so forth." "That small number," replied the gigantic trav-

eller, "may be sufficient for the views which the Creator must have had with respect to your narrow habitation. Your globe is little; its inhabitants are so too. You have few senses, your matter has few qualities, and your lives have few years. In all this Providence has suited you most happily to each other." The academician was vastly astonished at what the traveller told him. At length, after communicating to each other a little of what they knew and a great deal of what they knew not, and reasoning as well and as ill as philosophers usually do, they resolved to set out together on a little tour of the universe. In due time they will doubtless arrive at the earth and lift up both hands with astonishment to find how inferior to themselves in the scale of being are even our members of scientific academies.

So runs, substantially, a philosophic parable of the last century. Voltaire, with all his bitter prejudice against the supernatural, seems to have had no such prejudice against the superhuman, and to have seen how easy and natural it is to believe that man is one of the least considerable inhabitants of that great universe which has in it so many grander homes than our own.

Alps rise o'er Alps till the remoter summits are lost in clouds. Circles in the ocean go on widening out from the centre of disturbance till a

wave appears that touches every shore with its sublime round. Standing in the moonlight within some roofless ancient amphitheatre, we see terrace after terrace rising above us in ever-expanding sweeps till at last the sweep is among the stars. So, from where we stand stretch upward and away the terraces of personal being. Its summits go climbing up the heavens in long perspective. Amplitudes of faculty and position greater than our own climb away from us in every direction towards the infinite. Is there not an INFINITE?

# II. SUPREME DEITY.

Εἷς ἐστ' αὐτογενής, ἑνὸς ἔκγονα πάντα τέτυκται.

ORPHEUS.

There is one self-existent Being; everything generated has been produced by this one.

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Summum Deum et philosophi et poetæ, et denique qui deos colunt, sæpe fatentur. LACTANTIUS FIRMIANUS.

Both philosophers and poets, and indeed all who worship gods, often confess a supreme Deity.

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This Lord your God is God of gods. MOSES.

# II. SUPREME DEITY.

THE doctrine of one infinite personal God belongs to Christians, Jews, and Mohammedans. The doctrine of a *supreme Person*—of at least one Person who is vastly superior to all others and easily king over them all—belongs to *humanity*. All the nations confess him, all the existing religions take him for granted. Individuals here and there are atheistic; perhaps some small and rude tribes may be found without gods of any sort; but these make no figure on the broad face of the world and in the presence of its overwhelming majorities.

So it has always been, as far as history and tradition throw light. "All nations, as far back as we can trace their existence, have a religion and a God. During the present century the ancient records of Egypt, of Assyria, and the whole of Mesopotamia have been disinterred and read; researches in Persia have brought to light the condition of all Iranian tribes prior to the reformation of Zoroaster; while the Vedas, the religious poems of their kindred Indian Aryans, have been translated; and profound researches into the

ancient literature of China have unveiled the doctrine and worship before and since Confucius; and the result of the whole is that we find religion in these nations from the time of their existence as separate communities."

"Not a few learned and laborious inquirers have for the last seventy years been engaged in digging out the remains of old religions from amid the *debris* of popular traditions, of sacred books in forgotten languages, and of those languages themselves in which curious relics of still older strata have become imbedded. The Guzán, the Tripitaka, the Zendavesta, the Vedas, have been studied and analyzed. The hieroglyphics of Egypt, the wedge-covered slabs and bricks of Nineveh and Babylon, the rock-inscriptions of Persia and India, have yielded up their secrets. The traditions of the Aztecs and Zulus, the wild ideas and wilder practices of the Tartars, the Red Indians, and even the Australian aborigines, have been collated and compared. Mythologies—Greek, Celtic, Scandinavian, Indian—have been drawn together and have supplied much interesting information. The primitive Aryan culture has been pieced out from the scattered elements of the Aryan tongues, and attempts in the same direction have been made with the Semitic. And one result is that a certain discussion, once fierce, is

now almost obsolete. It is plain that there is a religion of some sort everywhere among men."

These testimonies from the Transactions of a learned society mean a practically universal recognition of deity, as one or many, through all known ages. Many gods have been the rule; but always a gradation has been understood to exist among them, and at the head of all has seemed to stand One who is their wisest and mightiest and kingliest. In the Valhalla or the Olympus there is always one throne higher than any other. Odin occupies it, or Zeus, or Baal, or Osiris, or Mithra, or Brahma, or Tî, or Allah, or Yahveh, (Jehovah.)

Different views have been held as to the character and various attributes of this supreme Person. Some have thought him more or less unrighteous; some have imagined him, in both character and natural faculties, far inferior to the God of the Bible; some have represented him by an ugly caricature of the human form, or even by brutes of the lowest type, some by the golden sun, some by such graceful and shapely statues as classic antiquity fashioned from marble and ivory and gold; while Jews and Christians attribute to him all conceivable and inconceivable perfections which they think it profanity to attempt to express by any outward figure whatever. But under

all these differences exists the common idea of a Person greater than any other, vastly greater than men, on whom men heavily depend and whom it mightily concerns them to please. This great idea dominates the whole world of mankind. Its colossal shadow lies across all the ages, all the countries, and all the literatures; for, as will be admitted, no account is to be made in so large a case of individual atheists, whether called sages or savages, thinly scattered among such immense populations.

Some indeed say that the Buddhists are atheists. It would be nearer the truth to say that Buddha himself was an atheist. But to his followers he himself has become a supreme deity, to whom temples are built and worship is paid. "He who had left no place in the whole universe for a divine Being was deified himself by the multitude, who wanted a Person whom they could worship, a Being whose help they might invoke, a Friend before whom they might pour out their most secret griefs," says Max Müller. Grimm says that the Scandinavian and Teutonic religions were originally the same; while Tacitus says that the supreme God of the Germans was a Being who is "master of the universe, to whom all things are submissive." In all the Teutonic tongues this Being was called *God.*

Until lately we were not as well prepared as we now are to deny the charge of atheism as against a considerable part of the American aboriginal tribes. An extensive inquiry recently made into the traditional beliefs of the early populations of both North and South America shows that they generally, if not universally, held to a realm of invisible beings in which there is a supreme Person far above all others in faculties and rank. "The grand tradition of a supreme Being traceable through Accadian, Assyrian, Persian, Egyptian, Hindoo, Greek, Roman antiquities has now been traced through the traditions of the unlettered Indian tribes of America."

But much more is true. It is now generally allowed by students in the most ancient literatures, languages, traditions, and monuments that these point to a time when all men held, not merely to a supreme Person, but to only *one* God deserving of worship. Dorner says, "There is scarcely a religion in which relics or surmises of the unity of God are not contained. Traces of this unity are: among the Hindoos, Brahma or Dyaus; among the Germans, Thio or Zio; among the Chinese, Tien; among the Etruscans, Tina; among the Persians, Ormuzd; among the Semites, Chon; among the Chaldæans and Greeks, Fate." Says Max Müller, "There must be one God; there must be

one unchangeable Deity: this was the silent conviction of the human mind." And by no means was it always a silent conviction. It has managed to speak loudly across the many centuries, through the pens of not a few scholars whose sympathies were not with their testimony. Comte, while asserting that men began as fetish-worshippers, confesses that India, China, and other countries—containing the majority of mankind—furnish little or no support to the assertion. In fact, they furnish a contradiction to it. Even Comte himself affirms the monotheism of the ancient Egyptians. Lucian tells us that originally they had no statues in their temples. The more ancient the monuments the more free are they from signs of polytheism; and when we come to what seem the most ancient all, as to the pyramid of Cheops and the "Book of the Dead," these signs wholly disappear. In a hymn contained in the 125th chapter of the "Book of the Dead," and which is said by Egyptian scholars to be the most ancient piece of poetry in the literature of the world, the Deity is described as the maker of heaven and earth, and the natural forces as his instruments in the government of nature. But all through the darkest periods the priests appear not to have shared the polytheism of the masses, and to have reserved to themselves and a few others a holy of holies in

religious opinion, over whose ark rested the glory of one God. Says Jablonski, "Those men most distinguished for wisdom among the Egyptians acknowledged God to be an eternal Spirit, prior to all things which exist, who created, preserves, and vivifies everything."

The same is true of that daughter of Egypt whom we call Greece. She too had her arcane theology in which one God sat enthroned. An elect few of priests, philosophers, and princes were initiated into what were known as *Mysteries;* and among these the greatest was the existence of one eternal Spirit from whom all other things came. The verses sung in the Eleusinian Mysteries contained this passage: "Pursue thy path rightly and contemplate the King of the world. He is One, and of himself alone; and to that One all things have owed their being. No mortal has beheld him; but he sees everything." As the sun sometimes appears dimly wading through deeps of clouds and at other times shows his orb in full splendor, so all through the Grecian history appears the great thought of the divine unity in the teaching of such men as Plato and Socrates and Pythagoras. But back of Pythagoras and Thales, back of Homer and Hesiod, we seem to come to a wiser time, when what became the property of the few was yet the property of the

many—that wiser time when to the Hellenic people at large the gods were not, but GOD was. In one of the Orphic fragments, preserved by Proclus, we find that "there is one Power, one Deity, the great Governor of all things." And Eusebius says that the Greeks were not worshippers of images before Cecrops.

Plutarch gives a like testimony as to the earlier Romans. He says that they were forbidden by Numa to represent Deity under the form of man or brute, and that for seventy years they had neither statue nor picture of him in their temples.

In the old Assyrian and Accadian hymns, amid signs of "gods many and lords many," there is still the echo of the fundamental thought of One who alone deserves the divine name; sometimes even more than this, as in the hymn,

"The God, my Creator, may He stand by my side!
In heaven who is great? Thou alone art great!
On earth who is great? Thou alone art great!
When thy voice resounds in heaven the gods fall prostrate!
When thy voice resounds on earth the genii kiss the dust!"

Buddhism, which has prevailed so extensively in Eastern Asia, was an offshoot from Brahminism; Brahminism itself was a corrupt offshoot from a still earlier religion, of which the most ancient of the Vedas is the best surviving exponent. This

book, the Rig-Veda, declares that the names of various gods are merely different names of one and the same Being: "That which is one the sages speak of in many ways; they call it Agni, Yama, Matarisvan, etc." If not practically monotheistic, as Max Müller seems to think it, the Rig-Veda is at least much nearer to monotheism than more recent Hindoo Scriptures. Schlegel says, "It cannot be denied that early India possessed a knowledge of the true God." As to the aborigines of China, what the Chinese consider the most ancient part of their sacred book, called Shoo-king, speaks of only one Deity possessed of all natural and moral perfections.

The object of the most ancient Norse worship was the "Author of all things, the Eternal, the living and awful Being, the Being that never changes; the possessor of infinite power, boundless knowledge, and inflexible justice."

In short, Larcher is borne out by the latest researches in declaring that the most ancient nations were not worshippers of idols. And M. Naville, the eminent Egyptologist, in his "The Heavenly Father," writes thus: "One of our fellow-countrymen who cultivates with equal modesty and perseverance the study of religious antiquities has procured the greater part of the recent works published on this subject in France,

Germany, and England. He has read them, pen in hand, and, at my earnest request, he has kindly allowed me to look over his notes, which have been long accumulating. I find the following sentence in the manuscripts which he has shown me: 'The general impression of all the most distinguished mythologists of the present day is that monotheism is at the foundation of all pagan mythology.'"

Prof. Rawlinson concludes his examination of the subject thus: "Our historical survey has shown us that in the early times, everywhere, or almost everywhere, belief in the unity of God existed; barbarous nations possessed it as well as civilized ones; it underlay the polytheism that attempted to crush it, retained a hold on language and thought, had from time to time its special assertors who never professed to have discovered it, and so lingered on, gradually becoming more and more enfeebled, until a fresh revelation of the unity was made by the gospel of Christ."

To this consensus add another—that of *experience*. The experience of multitudes is to the effect that prayer to such a Supreme Person as the Bible describes often gets answered in such a way as implies the existence of the Person addressed; also, that such a Being is needed to gov-

ern the universe to the best possible issues and away from the worst; also, that faith in such a Being is needed for the best interests of the world; also, that great generic needs in nature always have over against them the supplies for the needs.

Men, in cases innumerable, have called on God for favors and have received answers so circumstantially related to their requests as to demonstrate his existence. Many volumes of such cases are before the public. The lifelong experiences of George Müller at Bristol, England, are a monumental evidence of God—considerably higher than the pyramids.

Such a God as the Bible declares is *needed* to govern this great universe; so to manage and guide this great complex of forces as to secure from it, on the whole, good issues. What other power can do this? What else than the All-mighty and All-wise can guarantee this earth, to say nothing of the whole broad astronomical heavens, against summing up at last as an infinite disaster? Such a "madding crowd" of gigantic potencies, rushing and leaping in every direction and every now and then storming away into outbreaks of overthrow and desolation that appall us—I say, what shall warrant us that they will not at last bring all things to a universal hell? Not such wisdom and power as men possess. A manifold

experience in dealing even with this world is enough to make it plain how utterly insufficient are the human faculties to govern and shape the destinies of even so limited a kingdom. Men can govern men after a rude fashion; they can subdue some brutes and bend to their will to a certain extent a few inanimate forces; but when it comes to adjusting the sum total of the terrestrial forces into a balanced unit, and guiding the whole towards a definite end, we are as helpless as infants—helpless even to see what the proper end is, much more to see the way to it and to drive the great world-chariot along that way when discovered—much more helpless than Phaeton was to guide well the chariot of the sun. Were the reins trusted to us, we would, doubtless, drive to destruction and, meanwhile, set the world on fire. So unequal are we to guide the affairs of even this little world to good issues, much more to the very best. But what of the whole broad universe of worlds? Certainly none but an infinite personal God can make it sure, or even probable, that such a tremendous maelstrom of forces will not at last sum up as an awful curse. He can do it. He can make the cosmos a sublime blessing. He is needed *in order* that he may do it.

It is also the testimony of experience that *faith* in such a God is needed, as well as God himself.

Multitudes of persons, if not all, need this faith to restrain them from evil and to incite them to good. The tide of good influences within us is found rising as the idea of the Scriptural God draws near and grows large and vivid to our faith, and is found sinking as that removes and lessens and dims. Experiences to this effect are innumerable. The world has also found out by sad experience, and a plenty of it, that atheism endangers the family and society at large in many ways. Almost every intelligent father would regard atheism among his children as a cloud on their prospects; most parents would think it a very black cloud. If that family should become a nation his views would not alter. Did ever statesman say in his heart, "I see that the doctrine of an infinite and righteous God is steadily gaining ground in the country. This is alarming. I tremble for the consequences. We will have to whet up our laws, increase our police, make new prisons, chains, and gibbets"? Would any statesman that deserves the name talk in this way? This is just what he would say if he were to see the land becoming atheistic. He would take the fact as a threat at the morals and homes of the nation, at its credit and business and order, at property, authority, and personal safety. For all experience goes to show that society in any

desirable form could not long exist on a basis of stark atheism among the masses. It is doubtful whether it could long exist in any form. Nihilism and atheism are twins; when one is present the other is coming, or is already come, or has in its pocket an invitation to come. Stormy outbreaks of depravity and disorder in a godless people may be delayed for a time by various influences, as volcanic fires may for a while be kept down by heavy superincumbent strata; but the struggling demons will at last gather strength enough to burst through everything. And then Herculaneum and Pompeii and the French Revolution "with all its terrors."

Such are two great generic needs in nature to which experience testifies, viz., the need of God by all nature, and the need of *faith* in him by all men. But experience also testifies that every real need of a natural class of beings has somewhere over against it a supply for that need or the natural means of obtaining it—water for the fish, air for the bird, grass for the cattle, light for eyes, sounds for ears, odors for nostrils, beauty and grandeur to meet our taste for such things; objects to admire and love and trust to meet our powers for admiring, loving, and trusting; and so on all through nature, as far as our observation has gone. So it comes to pass that wherever in

the natural world a scientist discovers a great generic need, he feels authorized to assume that somewhere a supply for it exists or is obtainable. If nature has any vacuum incapable of being filled, utters any cry for aid which does not in the nature of things admit of being answered, grasps at any object not to be had in the whole empire of actual or possible, the fact has not yet been discovered. The supply may not be within easy reach of the need; a great gulf even may part the two; but, given the existence of the one, nature makes oath to the existence, actual or obtainable, of the other.

According to this, the need of God on the part of entire nature proclaims a God somewhere to match the need. And so the need of *faith* in God on the part of mankind proclaims at least the existence of reasonable natural means for securing faith; that is, good evidence of his actual existence—not here nor there, perhaps, but *somewhere.*

To this add what I will call a consensus of those sciences that deal with the structure and functions of plants, animals, and worlds. Astronomy, even atheistic astronomy, concedes a beginning of the worlds as such. Geology concedes a beginning of the races of plants and animals on our planet. And all the sciences that deal with organic being, whether living or fossil,

present us a scene of which some crowded Patent Office gives only a faint suggestion—show us countless numbers and varieties of inventions, contrivances, machines (so we would call them if they were the work of man), far superior in exquisiteness of adaptation to certain ends, and in the beauty and wonderfulness of the results achieved, to anything made by human ingenuity. Indeed, man himself is one of these natural organic marvels—man, who, from the necessity of the case, must be vastly superior to his own work.

Now, outside of the realm of natural organisms, all the examples of organization that we see, from the hexagonal cells of the bee to the glories of the proudest palace or cathedral, we unhesitatingly and unanimously ascribe to electing and shaping intelligence; and the more elaborate the structure and the more perfect the adaptation and conspiracy of the parts to their end, the higher and grander seems the intelligence it bespeaks in the maker. We do not need to *see* the maker in the process of making before our minds are made up. It is enough that in all cases in which the origin of such things has been noticed (and these cases are innumerable) they have come from a choosing and contriving workman. When, then, in course of a long advance from the humblest to the highest among organisms other than plants and ani-

mals and worlds, during which we have found not a single one among all their hosts not referable to intelligent authorship, we come to organisms of still higher grade which we know men did not make, shall we come to a full stop, reverse our logic completely, and proceed to doubt or deny intelligent authorship as universally as we have been affirming it? What right have we, who have just pronounced a cathedral on which we have chanced, and in regard to which we as yet know nothing but what we see, to have been made by intelligent workmen—I say, what right have we just at this point to face right about, throw away our old principles of judgment, and from like premises draw unlike conclusions as we inquire for the origin of that greater cathedral—man who made the cathedral? Bacon did not advise such a method of philosophizing. Science commands the contrary with the gesture and voice of a dictator. The voice is as one, but it is really a chorus and a great one. It comes from all points of the compass, from the depth as well as from the height. Nearly all the sciences that speak so grandly in our time join in it, and say that such an immensity of infinitely varied and exquisite organizations which are surely known to have been begun, and which, while so varied, have such broad zones of unity connecting them with

one another, must have had one practically infinite personal Maker. An unsophisticated person opening intelligent and astonished eyes on even the single microcosm of the human body, to say nothing of the human soul, does not feel it hard to say with Paul, "For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood from the things that are made, even his eternal power and godhead, so that they are without excuse."

But the concord of sciences is still broader. Nature, especially as interpreted by the natural sciences, shows us many points of positive harmony with the Bible doctrine of an infinite personal Maker of nature. In its vastness of extent; in its prodigious dynamics; in its mingled love and wrath, smiles and frowns; in its mysteriousness and unfathomableness; in its relations to law and time and motion, as suggesting a Power equally at home in the small and great, in the slow and swift, in the momentary and the everlasting; as well as in the multitude and variety and exquisiteness of its adaptation of means to ends, nature is just what we should expect from the hands of such a Maker as the Bible affirms. On the other hand, to offset these harmonies, science has not yet brought to light any provable discord. There are mysteries in nature; but mystery, instead of

being a discord, is one of nature's harmonies with Biblical Theism. If nature were not mysterious it would not be like the God of the Bible. Hugh Miller, speaking with geological lips, says that the God of the Old Testament is the God of nature: nature is not a gospel, but it nowhere forbids a gospel supplement.

Add to this a consensus of philosophic tests. If, among several hypotheses to account for a fact, one is found which, while amply sufficient and *a priori* as credible as any, is vastly the simplest, the surest, the safest, the sublimest, the most salutary, and the most in accord with the convictions and traditions of mankind, it would be accepted without hesitation by all reasonable people. Now such is the Theistic hypothesis to account for nature. An infinite personal Power is at least as credible as an infinite impersonal one—the only one now put forth to compete with Jehovah for the honors of Godhead. That an infinite Person is amply sufficient to account for all natural wonders is not open to question. As to the simplicity as well as sureness of the Theistic hypothesis, the merest child can understand it; while its only rival, the scheme of evolution, is so complex and complicated as to task the brains of philosophers; and even they, after wading through whole dreary volumes of muddy explanation, generally conclude with

saying *No* or *Perhaps*, instead of *Amen.* As to which hypothesis is the more salutary in its tendency on society, is best fitted to restrain men at large from evil and incite them to good—that which ascribes nature to such a God as the Scriptures teach, or that which makes it the child of a blind force which, however great, can neither note moral differences nor reward or punish according to them—it is not easy to see how there can be any honest difference of opinion; nor as to whether it is safer for a man to conduct life on the supposition of a God that can call him to account, or on the supposition of no God. By the one course he risks nothing; by the other he risks everything. We have seen how stand the convictions and traditions of mankind, especially of the more intelligent and well-deported masses.

That all these preëminences can be affirmed with supreme confidence of the Theistic hypothesis could hardly be plainer than it is to every tolerably well-informed person; nor could it be surer than it is that in matters of business, or even science, any hypothesis to account for a fact having such advantages over all others would be unhesitatingly accepted and acted on by all sensible people. It ought to be. Such credentials are imperative. They speak like a king to many parts of human nature, but especially to reason

and the principle of self-preservation. In fact they are the autograph and broad seal of that king whose name is Truth, and in the case before us of that King whose name is God. They are large enough to be descried and recognized from the stars. So they bind the conscience. No man can justify himself to science and philosophy, much less to common sense and common prudence, in refusing an hypothesis which he sees to be vastly simpler, surer, safer, sublimer, and more salutary than any other. Doubtless these facts have had much to do in promoting the general Theism of mankind. When they have not been distinctly conceived and expressed they have always been subtilly present in the air; as it were, thin ghosts and shadows have flitted dimly to and fro, looking in at our windows, stealing by our side with the faintest suspicion of a footfall, hovering over us with whispering wings, filtering a liliputian speech through the coarser voices of the world, and so gradually depositing faith in God as nature does the dew, with no rattle and outcry of machinery, but all silently and imperceptibly, even as the worlds above us steal on their magnificent courses through the heavens.

"Ere the radiant sun
Sprang from the east, or 'mid the vault of night
The moon suspended her serener lamp—

Ere mountains, woods, or streams adorned the globe
Or Wisdom taught the sons of men her love,
Then lived the Almighty One; then, deep-retired
In his unfathomed essence, viewed the forms,
The forms eternal, of created things:
The radiant sun, the moon's nocturnal lamp,
The mountains, woods, and streams, the rolling globe,
And Wisdom's mien celestial.
What he admired and loved his vital smile
Unfolded into being. Hence the breath
Of life informing each organic frame;
Hence the green earth and wild-resounding waves;
Hence light and shade alternate, warmth and cold,
And dear autumnal skies and vernal showers
And all the fair variety of things."

# III. EARTHLY PROVIDENCE

Divosque, mortalesque turmas
Imperio regit unus æquo. HORACE.

One governs with just sway both gods and mortals.

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Νυν δ' ἐλπομαι μεν. Εν θεῷ γε μαντελος. PINDAR.

At present I am hoping. But the issue is in the hands of God.

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And He is governor among the nations. DAVID.

# III. EARTHLY PROVIDENCE.

We can imagine the supreme Person utterly indifferent to what is going on among men and taking in it no part whatever. A few philosophers, so called, like Epicurus, have maintained that this imaginable deity is actual. Multitudes of people *act* as if Epicurus was right. Nevertheless, it is the theory of all the great creeds and sacred books of the world and of the great masses in all nations and ages that the Supreme is one who is more or less conversant with the affairs of this world, interested in its concerns, and actively employed among them. This is the reason why men always and everywhere have endeavored to propitiate him in many ways. They have feared divine action against them, hoped for divine action in their favor; so have set themselves to avert, if possible, the one and to secure, if possible, the other. The Jupiter of the Romans and Zeus of the Greeks was a being supposed to play a large part in the affairs of the world. So of the Egyptian Osiris, the Persian Ormuzd, the Phœnician and Chaldæan Baal, the Hindoo Brahma, the Scandinavian Odin, and the Great Spirit of the

American Indians. Oracles were given by them, messages sent, inspirations breathed, prayers answered, incarnations made, things common and things miraculous done; indeed, most natural phenomena have been ascribed to the supernatural. The oral and written traditions of all the chief nations of ancient and modern times are full of such things. In fact, the belief in the divine activity in human affairs has generally been so strong that men have been willing to put themselves to vast inconvenience and expense, and even suffering, in order to secure its favorable action in their affairs. Self-inflicted tortures, human sacrifices, exposures of children, as well as prayers and oaths to an immense extent, have testified to the sincerity of whole nations in thinking that deity is an active force among men. Some have thought this force largely unjust and malign; some have thought it at times hampered, deceivable, defeated, forgetful, slumbering; while, according to the faith of Christendom, it is the opposite of all these—a force whose activity is constant, universal, benevolent, all-wise, and all-mighty; a force brought to bear on every actual event and even on a host of harmful things which but for it would have become actual events. But that God stands wholly aside from the world of men, and neither cares nor does among them, is no

part of the world's faith and never has been, so far as we know. On the contrary, the great creeds, traditions, and catholic beliefs of mankind have always invested all deities with an activity and weight in human affairs proportioned to the power they were supposed to possess.

Is there any consensus of nature, as far as known to us by observation, experience, and the sciences, to negative this consensus of nations and traditions? For example, does the observed reign of law oppose it? Why should it be supposed to oppose activity in God any more than it does activity in man? But no divine agency is visible, and to some this present invisibility suggests unreality. But are there not many forces which act powerfully and yet act unseen? Even personal agents often do great things without manifesting themselves.

"But the universe as now known to us is so broad, man and his concerns are such an insignificant part of the whole, there are so many worthier fields for divine action than this, does it not look as if Deity must overlook us, as if he must scorn us, as if he would have neither ability nor leisure nor motive to notice us and take a noteworthy part in our affairs?" This consideration might have weight as against Jupiter, but not as against Jehovah. An infinite Being has no trou-

ble among the infinities, whether of space or number or duration. To him action here does not mean inaction yonder. He is not obliged to neglect the small that he may attend to the large, to leave the earth without government that he may reign in Sirius and Alcyone. Business does not crowd him, cares do not worry him, details do not exhaust his time and patience; maxima on the one hand and minima on the other are equally within his reach; there is no labor in either his doing or knowing, though it bear on every point in the whole astronomical heavens. To speak of things as too great or too small or too many or too remote for such a Being is too absurd. Considerations of distance or magnitude or number or duration have no meaning as related to either the knowledge or the power of such a Being.

The doctrine of divine activity among men is not only without discouragement from nature, but is in positive harmony with all that we know of it. Everything about us is constantly active on man in a greater or less degree. Not even the stones and dust of the highway are absolutely passive toward us for a moment. They are always throbbing on us with their gravities, chemistries, and latent fires. Not a star seen in our telescopes so distant that it does not affect us by its light, its attraction, its beauty, and its manifold suggestions.

The natural sciences, taken together, show us a universe of impersonal things, many of which are wonderfully potent, and all of which are incessantly active in their several spheres—spheres that mutually touch and interlock and have all vibrations in common, like the fancied heavens of Ptolemy. Ascending to personal beings, these too, as far as our observation has gone, are ever-active powers, each within its sphere intelligently and consciously and constantly bringing itself to bear on its environment, which immediate environment transmits the impulses it receives to a still wider horizon, and so on to the end, at least of this world; each doing this to an extent proportioned to its resources and opportunities. Some persons of great natures are magnificent in the extent to which they impress themselves on the world. Rivers of influence, broader and longer than the Amazon, flow away from their lofty summits. What they are hourly doing goes to shape nations and ages—it may be all the nations to come. They may be, and often are, very harmful things—devouring conflagrations, far-sweeping pestilences, terrible storms that shake whole oceans and strew distant shores with wrecks. But *forces* they are, ever-active forces, acting through immense spheres, acting away to remote horizons, and even the limits of the globe,

with an energy proportioned to the greatness of their natures and opportunities.

Thus, through the whole vast range of being as far as known to our secular observation and science, from a stone on the highway to some high Mightiness on his throne, all things are found incessantly active on man, and active according to the riches of their endowment. Of course the strong presumption is that, on ascending still farther to the Supreme Person, we do not come to a startling exception to the enormous and hitherto unvarying rule, but rather to One whose incessant activity among us is as supreme among personal activities as is His nature among personal natures.

Geology shows that all organic beings on the earth had a beginning. Of this beginning God is the sufficient and simplest and therefore the most scientific explanation. So he is the Maker and Father of men. But it is contrary to the nature and duty of a father not to care and do for his own children, of a maker not to care and do for the work of his own hands, so far as they may have need; and that men do need a heavenly caring and doing for them every day is terribly plain. From what we know of ourselves we are sure that God could not content Himself in the consciousness of a vast thesaurus of unemployed faculties,

especially in the presence of vast opportunities and vast need for their exercise, a need, too, of His own creatures and children. If we were worth making we are worth preserving—guiding and governing for the sake of preserving.

In brief: the Bible, as understood by all Jewish and Christian denominations, teaches a Supreme Person who is alive to what is passing in this world, deeply interested in its affairs, and personally and continually active in shaping events among us to a vast extent. This teaching agrees with that of all the other great creeds, traditions, and catholic beliefs of the world, since these ascribe to all their deities, greater and lesser, an activity and weight in human affairs proportioned to the greatness of the faculties they are supposed to possess. To this consensus of creeds and nations and ages must be added another which these "scientific" times are bound to make much of—that of testimonies from all the sciences, as well as from countless popular observations and experiences, to the effect that all other beings known to us, from the humblest to the highest, from minerals to men, are not only forces and ever-active forces, but forces ever active on *men and their belongings* in proportion to the powers they possess, and that consequently we are warranted in presuming that the highest Being of all is no excep-

tion to the otherwise universal rule, but acts in the affairs of the world to an extent as much grander than that belonging to any other agent as his powers are greater than theirs.

This means, for such a God as the Bible shows, a *universal* providence. Not a sparrow falls to the ground without him; not a hair of our heads fails to be numbered. Every single thing that occurs in the world occurs under his active supervision. So it has been in all past time; so it will be in all time to come; nothing ever transpires in which his great hand is not busy; not an event, however small, but could say with the Hebrew Psalmist, "Thou compassest my path;... thou hast beset me behind and before and laid thine hand upon me." Such power as his *can* do much for every conceivable event; such wisdom as his knows just what should be done and how to do it; such goodness as his disposes him to do in all things the best he can; such a nature as his can put forth an incessant and boundless activity without an atom of weariness or worry. An absolutely universal providence would cost such a being nothing, but would be an unspeakable advantage to the world. So he is bound to give it. So he actually gives it.

Many facts harmonize with this doctrine, and none can be shown inconsistent with it. Not a

few are of such a character that divine power must have directly produced them, and so must have determined their times, places, shapes, degrees, and other circumstances. Many other facts are so plainly useful and admirable, so like what we would naturally expect from a good being and wise, that they plainly accord with the idea that God is active in promoting them, if not in actually producing them. As to the remainder, viz., those facts that apparently are not desirable, but the contrary—such as temptations, sins, errors, sufferings—it can be shown that they are not inconsistent with the doctrine of a divine activity *in connection* with them, though some of them may be inconsistent with a divine activity in *producing* them.

Among the things in which God must have been active, because they must have been directly produced by him, are the following: worlds; plants and animals as organisms; vegetable and animal life; terms of growth, stature, and life; human souls; a multitude of historic miracles scattered through the centuries—miracles the denying of which unsettles all history. That the origin of such things must be traced directly to divine choice and power is conceded by all those among us who concede a divine Person. And if God originated habitable globes and organic spe-

cies and mysterious life and still more mysterious spirit, as well as the many signs and wonders and answers to prayer which secondary causes cannot explain, he must have regulated many particulars as to each of these things. For example, in producing a soul he determines *when* it shall appear, *where* it shall appear, what shall be its general calibre, what proportion to one another its various faculties shall have, what its environment shall be. In short, every such fact is extensively manipulated and governed. It enters the realm of being at this angle or at that as God chooses. It appears in the first century or in the nineteenth, in Europe or in America, in a palace or in a cottage, as seems to him good. Whether it is large or small, whether dowered as a poet or as a philosopher, depends on the purpose for which he wants it. It is sphered about by the Ten Commandments, and by a great many other commandments not so easily neglected.

But there is another large class of facts, viz., those of so pleasant and useful a character that one can readily believe them protected and promoted, if not produced, by divine agency. Such are the family, civil government, literature and science and art, virtues, victories of truth and right, richly deserved calamities, the reign of law. Were God to defend and further, or even

originate, such things with all the forces of his wisdom and power, he could not be thought to do anything inconsistent with the account given of him in the Bible, but, on the contrary, his action would be considered in loving and musical agreement with the same. The two notes chord perfectly. Such things are what we should suppose would come forth from Deity like outbreaking waters. They are just the children to come from such a parent, just the music to sound from such lips, just the rays to shoot from such a sun. Not discord but concord, not war but alliance, not a pulling apart but a pulling together, are the ideas suggested when we look at the doctrine of a universal divine providence in connection with such facts. Whatever may be said of certain other things, such useful things as water and air and light, as grass and flowers and fruits and grains and forests, as many domestic animals and birds of wondrous beauty and song, as happiness and virtue and truth and the great ethnic institutions which guard and foster these; the brilliant victories won in the name of science and humanity and God—all of which began, and so are events—all such bright and fair things face towards our doctrine, advance to meet it, take it cordially by the hand and say, Welcome!

There remains another class of facts, those

unpleasant and even pernicious ones which perplex and stumble so many—temptations, sins, errors, sufferings. Are these inconsistent with the doctrine of a divine providence that is active in whatever occurs? To show that they are so it would be necessary to show that such natures as men have (that is, natures capable of freely choosing or refusing the right, and so capable of virtue, and so capable of vice) are not indispensable to the best system. To many they seem the noblest conceivable natures. Beyond a doubt virtue is the grandest and fairest thing that ever shone on human or divine thought: in comparison with it all material or even intellectual magnificence and beauty are unworthy of notice. To dispense with such a free nature as man's is to dispense with the possibility of this incomparable jewel, to dispense with all the glorious actual examples of virtue which have illumined or will illumine the earth. The Bible being witness, the scattered stars of such examples now visible will gradually multiply till at last they run together in one general blaze of glory. Would it be well to give up the possibility of such a luminous hereafter? Who is Samson Agonistes enough to prove the affirmative? Such a feat in dialectics seems impossible. It certainly has never yet been performed.

Now such a moral nature is, by its very constitution, open to *temptations*. It can be solicited from all quarters. There is no compulsion to either this or that. Election, as between the good and bad, is perfectly free. Mettlesome steeds are under our rein, but we can turn them in any direction we please—into the desert or into paradise, into vice or into virtue. There are drawings in both directions, and must be. But drawings towards the evil can be successfully resisted. Successful resistance will build up a character into robust goodness as nothing else can. A habit of success will be formed which in time will become invincible. To secure this invincible habit, we will suppose, benevolent Deity brings himself to bear on every temptation which he cannot wisely prevent, to abate it, to shape it, to make all the circumstances of time and place and manner and motive as favorable as possible for rejecting it. Not a case on which he does not expend omniscience and omnipotence to make it harmless and even serviceable. His sword turns every way for this purpose. On each battlefield all his forces are massed, and every temptation is a battlefield. He would fain turn every temptation into a heavenly chariot for moral and religious progress.

But temptations too often issue in *sin*. Are

sins inconsistent with a divine providence being in them? Suppose this providence, instead of producing or promoting the sin in any way, acts wholly against it—to prevent it, to lessen it, to defeat its natural issues—persuading, commanding, marshalling natural forces and laws, applying directly that divine force that made natural forces and laws, doing the whole with a wholeheartedness that uses every available resource in heaven's treasury against the evil. Is such action as this inconsistent with the goodness or justice of God? Our claim is not that God is the author of sin or acts in its favor, which would be blasphemy; only that he acts in regard to it. If the action is wholly adverse; if he hates the sin, strives against it, does all he can consistently to cancel it or minimize its effects, then he does just what the Scriptures say he does, and there is nothing stumbling in the doing.

But *errors* occur as well as sins. Both are bad things—poisons, serpents, wild beasts—and one could wish that both had never come. But here they are despite our wishes, frightful and fruitful monsters, plainly come to stay. What shall we say of that ugly twin sister of sin called error, especially religious error? That it is so ugly that God could not have anything to do with it? Nay, but that he could not *favor* it either in action or feel-

ing. He surely may disfavor it, eliminate it as far as possible, abate its evil effects; and to this end may persuade, command, illuminate, hedge up some ways and open others, bring to bear natural forces and supernatural. Some errors seem inseparable from finite minds. Others seem inseparable from sinfulness. If God prevents all the mistakes that he wisely can, and narrows as much as he can all that he cannot consistently prevent, and does all he can to cancel their evil effects, why, this is the very thing we would expect a good God to do. The occurrence of errors is no proof that God is not active in regard to them; it is only proof that, whatever his activity against them may be, it is limited by the nature of things or by considerations of wisdom.

And what about the *sufferings* which so abound in the world and which stumble so many—as if a good God could not for a moment have anything to do with such disagreeable things! But some sufferings seem suitably connected with sin as cautions, chastisements, punishments. Others may serve a useful purpose to sinners as a means of moral discipline. So a considerable part of the sufferings of the world are only blessings dressed in black, and a benevolent being could consistently promote or even produce them. How does any one know that there are any other sufferings

than these? Can he *prove* that there are? If God dislikes suffering in itself and prevents as much of it as he wisely can, "never willingly grieving nor afflicting the children of men;" if his eye is ever on the alert to see and his hand ever on the alert to use all wise opportunities of warning off from the coast of being all temptations, sins, errors, and sufferings, then this is just what we should expect from a good God, and includes just what our doctrine of a universal providence affirms of him. For it affirms not that he acts *for* every event, but that he acts *in regard* to it. It may be for and it may be against. In the case of temptations, sins, and errors it is but fair to think that it is always against. God is always crowding such things to the wall. Very much the same of suffering. He uses it freely on occasion; he produces it, if need be, but he regards the necessity as a thing to be deplored. So he lays himself out to have just as little sorrow in the world as possible. He hunts it down with unsparing and unending vigilance. But it is not possible to dispense with it altogether. The natural connection between sin and suffering cannot and should not be severed. There must be chastisements and remorses and punishments for offenders. Moral discipline must be looked after, and drossy character must pass through the fires.

We find that the allotments of men in this world are not always according to character. "There be just men to whom it happeneth according to the work of the wicked, and again there be wicked men to whom it happeneth according to the work of the righteous." The good often become poor and the bad rich. The unworthy often rise to great honors and the worthy sink to great dishonors. Righteous men often die in their prime and the wicked grow old in their wickedness. The best causes sometimes get defeated and the worst triumph. Among States, as well as among individuals, "the race is not always to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favor to men of skill, but time and chance happen to them all." Can this be and yet the providence of God extend to every event?

Suppose that the present life is probationary; that God's object here is not to treat men according to their deserts, but according to the way best fitted to form a good character; that apparent prosperity or adversity is not always real for either an individual, a cause, or a community—grant a few such things (and why not?), and the facts just cited cease to be objections to our doctrine. God has not prevented certain facts

which you regard as infelicities or as injustices. Are you sure that your views of things are correct? Are you sure that good men or good causes are not sometimes benefited by head-winds and stormy times and wrestlings and delays? Are you sure that it is always best that sentence against an evil work should be executed speedily; that none for a time should be treated better than they deserve; that adversity never keeps the best school for the best men? Are we sure that outward prosperity is not often as much a mother of sunstrokes as is a sultry summer day—outward adversity not as much a mother of fruitful showers as is yonder angry-looking cloud or as yonder biting Arctic that ventilates the world? We are *not* sure. We have not a modest probability even. On the contrary, everything looks in the opposite direction, in the direction of thinking that divine power and wisdom are active in every one of these seemingly unequal allotments of worldly advantage, directly producing and promoting some of them, and so manipulating others in themselves undesirable, but which cannot be wisely prevented by Deity, as to minimize their evil issues. For to say that the power of God is busy in any event is not the same thing as saying that he approves of it or promotes it. It may be that he fights against it, restrains it, pares it down, over-

rules it, fends off or limits its evil consequences, "rides and rules the storm" which he did not evoke, encompasses the mischief as a brisk, sunny, healthful atmosphere does the carrion which it is busily engaged in carrying away and redistributing in healthful combinations.

We see, then, in what sense the lives of all men may be said to be ordered by God. If each event, however small, powerfully feels the regulating pressure of a divine Hand, it follows that each life in all its details powerfully feels that pressure and is a very different thing from what it would have been without a divine providence. This is what is meant when we say that every man's life is divinely ordered. We do not mean that God decrees and is responsible for all our temptations and sins and ignorances and mistakes and resulting misfortunes, that he produces or promotes or favors them in any way; but simply that the divine power and wisdom are dealing with each life at every point in order to help it as much as he can consistently with the general good. The bush is aflame with a speaking divinity for this purpose and for no other. Each life represents the best that *God* can do under the circumstances.

This is the sense in which *every* man's life is ordered by God. But the ordering of a good

man's life is a very different thing from the ordering of another man's, as one would naturally infer from such passages as these: "The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord." "In all thy ways acknowledge Him and he shall direct thy paths." In the case of a loyal subject and friend, God can properly do far more for his advantage than he could do were the man disloyal; he can reconcile with the general good a far greater amount of good to the individual, just as all human governments can. There is little that such governments can do for law-breakers and rebels, and yet conserve the public weal. But in proportion as the subject is loyal and law-abiding it becomes possible, in consistency with the general good, for the government to shine out upon him with full-orbed favor. So the divine government can be, and is, specially favorable to the interests of its loyal subject and friend; not perhaps to what you and I may chance in our short-sightedness to *think* his interests, but to his *real* interests, namely, his character and happiness in the long run. For such interests the divine Ruler can make "all things work together for good."

An easy inference is that it is greatly worth our while to be the loyal subjects and friends of God. If we knew a man of such commanding

influence that he could help or hinder our lives at all points, so that any plan of ours stood not the least chance of success without his consent and every chance of success with it, we should think it little short of madness to treat him with insolence or neglect. No sensible person would do such a thing. He would, on the contrary, make all possible efforts to be on the best of terms with one on whom his interests so thoroughly depended, especially if he knew that the possessor of such power over his interests was disposed to use it. He would carefully avoid giving him any ground of offence. He would try to fulfil his wishes in every particular. To this end he would put himself to large inconvenience and even great sacrifices.

Now God, it seems, is such a being infinitely magnified. There is not a jot of our welfare which is not completely in his hand, not a tittle of our lives which his omniscience and omnipotence do not grasp. We can get nothing when he says, *No;* we can get everything when he says, *Yes.* "Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it; except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain." He knows every turn of our affairs, he is hard by at every crisis; crisis or no crisis, he is hard by. There is no pit of misfortune from which his hand

cannot lift us, no pinnacle of good fortune from which his hand cannot hurl us. And it is not merely a question of what he *can* do. The power he has is the power he uses. He is fashioning our lot at every point, at every moment, as the potter fashions the clay on his wheel. Not a sand-grain on our shore, not a grass-blade on our farm, not a leaf in our forest, not a word or even letter in our book, but wears his harness and carries his bit. Yes, it must be a great thing to have God for a friend. It is wonderfully worth our while to be his loyal subjects, especially if to be loyal to him is to be loyal to righteousness, if to win and keep his favor we will not be obliged to stoop to any meanness or unreasonableness, but may keep to a path of manly uprightness as lofty as the stars. Is not this possible? Inquire and see. It is written, "No good thing will he withhold from him that walketh uprightly."

# IV. RELIGIOUS WORSHIP.

Παρὰ πᾶσιν ἀνθρωποις πρωτον νομιζεται τοὺς θεοὺς σέβειν.

XENOPHON.

It is believed that the gods have been worshipped by all men from the first.

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Σέβειν τὰ των θεῶν κάλλιστον οἶμαι γ' αυτὸ και σοφώτατον θνητοῖσιν εἶναι. EURIPIDES.

To worship the gods I think to be the fairest and wisest thing for mortals.

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Oh, come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord our Maker. DAVID.

# IV. RELIGIOUS WORSHIP.

All denominations of Christians, without a dissenting voice, agree that worship is to be paid to the supreme Person. Acts of reverence and homage, such as prayer, praise, offerings of various kinds, together with reverent looks and tones and postures, are withheld from God in no section of the Christian church. On the contrary, such things are everywhere enjoined as indispensable duties and high privileges. All the great Christian voices are equally positive and imperative. Forms of worship vary; some wear hats before the Lord, while others think it more reverent not to wear them; some use a ritual, while others decline it; some sit in prayer, while others stand or kneel; some praise with the voice only, while others add the music of artificial instruments; but not a murmur of dissent as to the propriety and obligation of either private or public worship can be detected by the sharpest ear. More than this: in no section of the Christian church can a man who wholly neglects worship pass current as a Christian man. If he has no sanctuary, no prayer-meeting, no family altar, no grace at meals, no

closet; if he never adores nor supplicates nor gives thanks, never bows the head nor closes the eye nor awes the voice nor bends the knee before God, his character in the community is settled. Whatever else he may be, he is not a Christian. There is not a Christian denomination on earth that will acknowledge such a man as a worthy member.

A like agreement is found among all the religions. The Bible says, "Worship before Him, all the earth. Oh, come, let us worship and bow down, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker. Bring an offering and come into his courts. I will that men pray everywhere. Pray without ceasing. In everything give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." And so on, in a great variety of modes, from Moses to John.

What the Bible says is substantially said by all the great sacred books and creeds now found in the world. The Koran, the Avesta, the Vedas, the Tripitaka, the pictured monuments of Egypt and Phœnicia and Assyria, the still nobler and more lasting monumental histories and poems in which are preserved the religious creeds of Greece and Rome, all cry out, WORSHIP, with scarcely less emphasis than the Bible itself. They all appoint churches or synagogues or mosques or temples,

all decree private as well as public devotions, all have their prescribed rites and ceremonies in honor of at least One who is considered the Supreme of beings. Whether he is called Jupiter or Brahma or Buddha or Allah or something else, certain outward acts of reverence and homage must be paid to him. So say all the Gentile bibles the world around. They echo our own Bible, and that without any loss of sound. Like our own Bible, they all insist on worship as a part of the alphabet of religion. That it is a fitting and necessary thing is an unquestioned and unquestionable axiom with them all. Where is the religion that does not even look with surprise and wrath on the man who never pays any tokens of honor to his God?

To say that all religions agree in calling for worship to the supreme Person is the same as saying that all *nations* agree in it; for no nation now known is without one or more religions formally assented to by the great bulk of the people or by that part which stamps the national character. It is claimed that a few small clans or tribes are entirely without any form of religious belief and worship, but even this is by no means clear. On the other hand, it is perfectly clear and conceded on all hands that, if some such small religionless communities exist, they are among

the most degraded of mankind and form an inconsiderable part of the race.

And it should be noted that the formal assent given to worship by all nations, that is, by humanity at large, is generally more than formal. It expresses *real* conviction and shapes actual conduct. As everybody knows, there is sometimes a wide difference between the actual views and conduct of men and the precepts and tone of their accepted sacred books and traditions. The Jews were often a very unhandsome translation of the Old Testament. Christendom is by no means all the New Testament commands it to be, either in its thinking or in its practice. The India of to-day has diverged far from the doctrines and practice of the Rig-Veda. The present Buddhist does not fully appear in the Tripitaka, nor does the present Moslem in the Koran nor the present Parsee in the Avesta. But in the matter of worship the attitude of the nations generally is, both theoretically and practically, that of their sacred books and creeds. They thoroughly believe in deity of some personal sort and offer him some sorts of reverential recognition and tribute that deserve to be called worship. These are often ill-judged, and even discreditable, as to form and method; but then they are real attempts to honor and propitiate supreme Deity. How small a

percentage of the Asiatics neglect worship, even at great cost! How few, relatively, on any continent have never at any time sincerely invoked supernatural aid or taken an attitude of reverence and homage towards the Supreme, and would not under like circumstances do the like again! So there is a consensus of nations in fact as well as in form in favor of worship.

This is how the world stands at present. How has it stood in the long past? For aught we can see (and we can see a long way), precisely as now. More than 1,700 years ago Plutarch wrote, "If you will take the pains to travel through the world you may find towns and cities without walls, without letters, without kings, without money, without theatres and places of exercise; but there never was seen, nor shall be seen by man, any city without temples and gods or without making use of prayers, divinations, and sacrifices for the obtaining of blessings and the averting of calamities and curses. Nay, I am of the opinion that a city might sooner be built without any ground to stand on than a commonwealth be constituted altogether void of any religion and opinion of the gods, or, being constituted, be preserved." Lest this opinion of Plutarch should be thought too antiquated and unscientific, let Laplace speak: "I have lived long enough to know what at one time I

did not believe—that no society can be upheld without the sentiment of religion." We have a larger horizon than Plutarch or even the great French scientist had, and our historic telescopes pierce much more widely and remotely into the dimness of the past than did theirs; but we are obliged to tell the same story. Neither history nor tradition carries us back to a time when men as a race were not worshippers. Back through ancient Britain and Gaul and Germany, through still more ancient Rome and Greece, through still more ancient Egypt and Phœnicia and Assyria, travels our searching gaze (thanks to the time-defying monuments and such men as Tacitus and Herodotus and Manetho and Berosus and Moses) till we seem almost to see the very cradle of the race; and everywhere, among the most easily discerned of all objects, are altars and sacrifices and clouds of incense and votive offerings and shrines and bended knees and uplifted hands, in consecrated groves or tabernacles or temples. "It is believed," said Xenophon, some 400 years before Christ, "that the gods have been worshipped by all men from the very beginning." There have been, here and there, worshipless individuals (a few freckles on the face of the world), but the world as such has always been a worshipping world. The worship of the true God has some-

times almost disappeared, but worship of some being supposed to be supreme has not failed for an hour, nor failed to be almost universal. When some Democritus or Epicurus or Lucretius has ventured to speak against worship, either on the ground that there is no God or that, if he is, he does not concern himself with what men do, the great bulk of people have looked on him as a monster. "Let the atheist drink the hemlock," said the Athenian democracy. If the masses of humanity in every age have not gone so far as this, they have always gone so far as to look on a worshipless man with wonder and horror.

So much stress have all visible past ages laid on worship that they have, at almost boundless expense, dedicated to it the choicest work of the sculptor, the painter, the architect, the musician, and the poet. I am thinking of such temples as that of Belus at Babylon, of Isis at Memphis, of Diana at Ephesus, of Minerva at Athens, of Jehovah at Jerusalem. I am thinking of such cathedrals as those of Rome, Milan, Cologne and Moscow—indeed, of a host of palaces of God bestarring all Christendom with such wonders of grand and beautiful architecture as seem but little short of crystallized worship, and even tempt men to almost worship the builders. To aid the worship for which these costly structures have been

raised have been wrought the bravest works of sculptors and painters, from Phidias and Apelles to Angelo and Raphael. To aid the same worship have been prepared the noblest strains of poetry and music that ever voiced human emotion, from David and Asaph to Mozart and Handel. To-day, if the traveller in any country wishes to see the best it has to offer in the way of high art, he goes to its pagodas or mosques or churches. All that the mere outward can do to encourage and dignify worship seems to have been done; and especially, if the reality of Christian worship were now in proportion to its magnificent symbols and conveniences, the kingdom of God among us would not now be merely the kingdom of the sun-rising. Some think that there has been no little mistake just here; some of us object to statues and pictures and ecclesiastical millinery, and perhaps incline to think that even Christian sanctuaries may be too grand and costly in view of the vast needs of a still unevangelized world; but of this there can be no doubt, that the exceeding costliness of the equipment for worship in all lands and times testifies loudly to the exceeding value of worship in the opinion of mankind. Men have not only taught and practised worship almost universally, but their sense of its importance has been such that on no other one

earthly thing, perhaps, have they made so large an outlay of pains and genius and gold.

How came it that the worship of the supreme Person is so widely believed in, practised, taught, and emphasized? Is it from a clear primeval revelation? Did God show his will to our first parents in some unmistakable manner; and did they, as they diverged from the original centre, carry with them, all over the globe and down through all generations, the original law of worship? Very likely, not to say certainly. But there is another great force at work. Worship has in its favor a consensus of revelation with nature in many forms—with nature in man, in brute organisms, and even in the inorganic world. Notice, first, the consensus with the instincts, needs, and laws of human nature and society. As the instinct of a bird teaches it to fly, to build a nest, to provide suitable food for its young, so men are taught by their instinct to worship. It acts in advance of reason. It impels the child to reverence its parents, the adult to uncover before the greatness of kings, sages, heroes, and saints. It is natural to men, as natural as it is to breathe, to hold in honor great faculty, great knowledge, great power, great goodness, or great position, in their fellowmen; and equally natural to *express* this inward honor by certain outward acts, as bowing, kneel-

ing, deferential looks and tones. So such things are required by an immemorial law of society, as sure and imperative as the law of gravity. One cannot transgress the law with impunity. Should he refuse altogether acts of honor and reverence in his dealings with men, however great, he would not be tolerated. Is he a madman or a fool? So they cast him out—out of the synagogue of good society, to herd with the boors and pariahs and fellahs where he belongs. But, really, no one ever succeeds in totally suppressing the instinct which prompts to outward tokens of veneration and homage, though it often is successfully resisted and confined. And this in presence of such low forms of greatness as exist in men. How much more in the presence of such wondrous forms of greatness as unite in God! One has to *defy* the promptings and instincts and laws of his nature, if, on due presentation of the idea of God, he does not feel powerfully stressed towards all possible tokens of reverence, subordination, and homage. Will not his stiff knees instinctively begin to bend at first glimpse of such majesty? Will he not, ere he is aware, have bared his brow and awed his voice and bowed his neck with its iron sinew at the sight of such unparalleled power and knowledge and position and everything that is great?

Also, various *needs* of the individual and of society require worship. Real prayer emphasizes the sense of dependence on God—a sense that needs to be emphasized, we are so prone to self-sufficiency and forgetfulness of the Supreme, so apt to look supremely at second causes, so given to act independently of a higher will and wisdom than our own, and so to incur innumerable dangers and damages. Real thanksgiving emphasizes our sense of obligation to the supreme Benefactor—a sense the absence of which is shocking and damnable and sure of punishment, and yet one to which men tend with an almost irresistible gravity and depravity. In short, every real act of reverent homage paid to God calls him up distinctly before the thought; and if the acts of worship are frequent and habitual, they make him, as it were, an abiding presence. The effect can hardly be other than salutary in the highest degree. Consider what God is. He is glorious company. All that is low and unworthy naturally stands abashed in His presence. All that is high and worthy naturally lifts its head and blooms and rejoices as in a glorious sunshine. If "he that walks with wise men shall be wise," how much more he that walks with God! "Into the same image, from glory to glory," is the natural sequence of a divine companionship, and so of a close companion-

ship with the divine idea vividly held. As "evil communications corrupt good manners," so grand and holy communications improve them. Here, too, we have the outcome of a natural law, profound and far-reaching, covering the whole vegetable and animal kingdoms, the general expression of which is that "like begets like." The solicitude of parents and others as to the company, whether of persons or of books, which the young keep roots itself finally in a conviction of the truth and commanding character of this law, a law which is so recognized in every department of observation and science that deals with organic nature that not to know and act upon it is unscientific. This law bids every man, as he values the health of his soul and the moral success of his life in this world, to worship God regularly and often. The individual needs worship to meet the instinct of worship, to satisfy the æsthetic nature, to fulfil the sense of the "beautiful and fitting," to quiet conscience, to restrain the bad and bring forward the good within him; also, as most persons think, to escape great penalties and secure great rewards from One who said, "Those who honor me I will honor, and those who despise me shall be lightly esteemed." Society needs worship as fostering reverence for authority and law, a spirit of just subordination, respect for the rights

of others, a sense of a higher government that can deal with the springs of conduct in the thoughts and feelings which no civil government can reach—in short, as being the sworn foe of that levelling spirit which under various names now so gravely threatens the welfare, if not the very existence, of society. All these needs, bottoming themselves in certain instincts and laws of organic nature, make with revelation a consensus in favor of worship which, no doubt, has had much to do with making it practically universal, not only with all denominations of Christians and the chief religious and sacred books, but also with all nations and ages of mankind as far as known.

There is also another consensus, in which inorganic nature joins with the organic. Plants, brutes, and especially men, show a host of marvellous contrivances which we know to have had a beginning, and also know to be infinitely beyond what man can make or even understand. Inorganic nature makes a like showing. Light, heat, gravity, electricity, air, water, soil, the various chemical elements with their affinities and laws of combination, all speak of a wisdom and power quite unfathomable by us. And through both organic and inorganic worlds runs a conspicuous vein of unity that implies the unity of their Maker.

This joint testimony of the two great kingdoms of nature to the greatness of the one God is really a joint testimony to his worshipfulness. It says, as does the Bible, "Oh, come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord our Maker." And it says it loudly, so loudly that "there is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard: their line is gone out into all the earth, and their words to the end of the world," making even the heathen "without excuse because that when they knew God they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful."

As we have seen, the idea of a Being standing on the summit of existence, and practically infinite in faculty as compared with men, is held and has always been held, so far as we can discover, with unquestioning faith by the great bulk of mankind as well as by its wisest and best. And now we see that *worship* of this great Being is about as widely accepted as is the Being himself. No denomination of Christians, no class of religionists, no sacred writing, no nation the broad world over, no age the broad historic and traditional past over, but summons men to worship as the muezzin from his minaret does the Moslem. That great composite voice rolls round the world, and all the more because there blends with it and lifts under it a mighty ground-swell of sympathetic sound from

all parts of great nature, both organic and inorganic, but especially from the instincts and needs and laws of human nature.

And yet there are those in Christian lands (far more there than elsewhere) whose voices are not heard in this great chorus. They never pray in the closet. They never pray in the family. They never offer that act of worship which consists in reading the Scriptures. They are seldom, if ever, found at prayer-meeting or sanctuary; and if found there it is not as genuine worshippers. The form is hollow. As they go and as they stay, there is in them no conscious sense of dealing directly with God in an act of homage. When the minister prays they do not join in the adoration or supplication or thanksgiving, though, it may be, they bow the head in deference to usage. When the minister reads and expounds and enforces the Scriptures, the listening, more or less, which they give is not as to the oracles of God, but as to the words of a man. And yet these men are not all atheists. Many of them admit that there is a God and that he is as worshipful as the Bible represents.

Let these men consider how they stand. They stand practically alone. Even their own selves do not stand by them. Neither their instincts nor their consciences nor their reasons give them any

support in the unworshipping attitude they hold. In addition, they are vigorously attacked in it by the example and the convictions of humanity at large in all ages, and by the demands of every system of religion that has undertaken to teach men. Revelation is against them, and science itself is against them, if science includes the laws of human nature (the laws on which human society rests as to its welfare, if not its existence), and at least two laws which are more general still, viz.: like begets like, and, a wise man, shut up to one of two courses, takes the more promising one of the two. If the Bible is true, there is wrath in store for the man who never prays or otherwise puts forth acts of honor and homage towards the heavens; and, on the other hand, heaven is in store for him who genuinely worships. So a worshipless man sins against the law of self-preservation. He is disastrously singular and inconsistent with himself. What, perhaps, he will think a heavier charge, he is unscientific, in that he refuses to be taught by an immense induction of facts that worship has the suffrage of human nature and is greatly rewarding, while it would be hard to mention an evil or danger belonging to it. He is unscientific, inasmuch as every science testifies to the infinite greatness and worthiness of God, and so to the naturalness and obligation on

our part of all possible acts of reverence and homage. He is the scientific man who is Baconian enough to be guided by an *experimental* philosophy, that is, by the experience of mankind, which is one with its logic in saying to us, WORSHIP GOD.

# V. EFFICACIOUS PRAYER.

Εὔχεσθαι· πάντες δε θεῶν χατέουσ' ανθροποι.

HOMER.

Pray, for all men require the aid of the gods.

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Καὶ γάρ τε Λιταί εἰσι Διὸς κουραί μεγάλοιο:
Ος μέν τ' αἰδέσεταὶ κούρας Διὸς ἄσσον ιούσας
Τον δε μέγ' ὤνησαν καὶ τ' ἔκλυον εὐχομένοιο.

HOMER.

Prayers are the daughters of great Zeus: whoever reveres them as they approach him, they greatly aid and listen to his entreaties.

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The supplication of a righteous man availeth much.

St. James.

# V. EFFICACIOUS PRAYER.

By efficacious prayer I mean prayer that has influence with Deity to secure the things asked for.

I have shown a consensus of religions and mankind in favor of worship. But there is also an equal consensus in favor of the efficacy of that part of worship which we call prayer. Not efficacy for securing *all* the objects one chooses to pray for, but for securing such of them as do not conflict with the divine will. The world-feeling has always been that many such things are granted in answer to prayer which would not be granted without.

Some in Christian lands dissent. Perhaps they quote an ancient parable, as follows: A certain man was on his death-bed. He called his sons to him and said, "My dear children, I have a treasure of great value hidden somewhere in my fields: when I am gone dig for it and you will be sure to find it." After the funeral the sons set to work. With great diligence and perseverance they dug the whole farm over. They found neither gold nor jewels nor anything else they had expected; but as they dug they found appe-

tite, strength, health, habits of industry; moreover, the land, so thoroughly broken up and exposed to sun and air, gave magnificent crops. Then they understood what treasure their wise father meant.

"Such," say some, "is the experience of those who pray for particular things. They do not get the good they seek, but they do get a very good substitute for it in the moral exercise and culture which the praying involves. And this is all that they get. The praying has no tendency whatever to secure the thing prayed for. Nothing is gained by application to Deity which would not come without the application. He is immutable. He will do what seems to him good without regard to our judgment and wishes. And he ought to do so if he is infinitely wiser and better than we."

But this is not the doctrine of the Scriptures. On the contrary, they attack it as with drawn swords. "Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain, and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain and the earth brought forth her fruit." "And this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us: and if

we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions we desired of him." "What nation hath God so nigh to them as is the Lord our God in all things that we call upon him for?" "All things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive." "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God, and it shall be given him." "How much more shall your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them who ask him!" And so on to almost any extent. Whatever limitations of such comprehensive language may be required by common sense and the nature of the case, they evidently do not touch the doctrine of efficacious prayer that vitally pervades the whole as blood does an animal body. You cannot prick the body anywhere without finding blood. So many are the examples of the granting of specific requests by a prayer-hearing God to the Hannahs and Davids and Hezekiahs and Elijahs of the Bible, so many are its general encouragements to expect that in many cases the exact things asked for will be granted, that were we to cite them all we should have an army, an army quite too large to be handled on the small field at our disposal. But it is not necessary. No intelligent believer in the Bible but believes in efficacious prayer.

Similar is the teaching of the Koran. Prayer,

fasting, alms, and a pilgrimage to Mecca are the four great points of Mohammedan duty. Five times each day the minaret calls to prayer; five times a day the faithful, wherever they may be and however engaged, fall on their knees with faces towards Mecca; for is it not written, "Prayer is the pillar of religion and the key to Paradise"? And though the Koran teaches that all things are so fated that they cannot be otherwise than they are, yet the faithful do not allow that this is at all inconsistent with the efficacy of prayer in procuring the blessings prayed for. Accordingly, they pray for all sorts of things, just as Christians of every name are accustomed to do—for daily bread, for success in their enterprises, for prolific flocks and herds, for protection in dangers, for guidance in perplexities, for pardon of sin, for the spread of their faith, for final salvation—indeed, just as all the polytheistic nations have been doing from at least the beginning of our acquaintance with them. They have asked their gods for whatever they wanted, from a crust to a throne, from some feather of a private convenience to a solar system of national victories. The habits of the old Greeks and Romans have long been known to general scholars; but more lately the studies of antiquaries, missionaries, and travellers have shown that the same habits have prevailed among all the

great nations, ancient and modern. They have prayed, not as a mere decorous form, not because of the culture-value of the exercise (of which they knew nothing and cared as little); but because they supposed that there was at least a possibility of their getting by their prayers the particular things they wanted. They were not sure. The Deity might be propitious or he might not. He might think it best to grant or he might not. At any rate, prayer was worth the trying. That prayers were often successful, that in almost any given case they might be, that their general stress is to procure from Deity the favors which they aim at, so that one in the use of them would in the long run make great gains not otherwise procurable, has been universally held. The nations have not been philosophers. They have not asked for things because they thought the exercise of praying would do them good as so much gymnastics might do their bodies, but because they *wanted* certain things and thought that asking for them was a likely, or at least a possible, means to their end. This thought has really lain at the bottom of all the bended knees and lifted hands and outcries heavenward that have besought in grove or pagoda or mosque or tabernacle or temple or synagogue or church or closet from remotest antiquity. Were men to understand that the

prayerless are just as likely as the prayerful to get what they want at the hands of the Supreme, prayer would disappear from the face of the earth; not at once perhaps, for old habits are powerful; but as the dew disappears, or as the showers which have drenched the ground gradually evaporate until at last the fields are black with drought and famine.

Efficacious prayer is what we have some *a priori* reason to expect. In the present absence of miracles we seem to need some way of realizing to ourselves the continued presence and agency of God in human affairs, some way within reach of everybody. We are born and bred in the presence of the great works of nature. Day and night, each day and all day, they meet us at every turn, till they are as familiar as our own selves. The familiarity does not breed contempt, but it does breed inattention and insensibility. The wonderful heavens and earth do not call out wonder. They affect us no more than does the constant ticking of the old family clock that from its corner looked down on our cradles. We have to shake ourselves. We have to shout to our absent-minded eyes and ears, "Wake up, man! Look! Listen! Will you allow all these great things to be to you as if they were not?" And when by a struggle we have managed to get into a wakeful

state, even then we are only too apt to look on the glorious constitution and course of nature as on some ancient clock that was made and wound up ages ago after a very enduring fashion, and continues to go on quite of itself. The adversary tempts us. Does the Power that in some far-off time set up the present system of things still abide as an open-eyed and active agent within it? Let us make trial; *let us pray.* And so the prayers go up; and every now and then, we will suppose, fulfilments come down so circumstantially and intrinsically agreeing with the prayers that no theory of mere hap-hazard or of secondary causation can reasonably explain the agreement. The Baconian starts. "Then, after all, God is not dead; after all, he is not a mere antiquity; nor is he an unhearing and unthinking force eternally coursing through the veins and arteries of eternal nature, mutually convertible with electricity and gravity and what not, but a PERSON who to-day and here and in my petty concerns has open eyes and ears and ready-sceptred hands." And as fulfilment after fulfilment rolls up evidence after evidence till a mountain touches heaven and faith practically becomes sight, he will come to exclaim, "Surely the Lord was in this place and I knew it not; surely he is not far from any one of us; but in him we live and move and have our

being." Such a means of bringing God nigh to every man seems exceedingly desirable. It is by no means unlikely that such a God as the Bible describes would provide what we need. It is a thing to be looked for rather than otherwise. Instead of being surprised at some undeniable answer to prayer, as one might be by the falling of rain from a clear sky or by sunshine at midnight, one should feel it to be so entirely accordant with what he would naturally expect in the case as to call for no surprise whatever, however much of admiration and gratitude it may demand. It is the natural corollary of a Biblical Theism, or indeed, for that matter, of any respectable Theism. All the logic in the preliminaries of the case looks towards efficacious prayer.

But the fulfilments just supposed are not mere suppositions. The efficacy of prayer is matter of experience—of so many experiences that the gathering together of the waters makes seas, which add a very loud voice indeed to that of the united religions, faiths, and practices of mankind. It is on unimpeachable testimony that great numbers of Christians have actually had their prayers for specific favors so minutely fulfilled that no explanation of the fact other than that of divine interference for the purpose of fulfilling is scientifically tolerable. Perhaps there are few Christians of

long standing who have not had one or more such convincing answers. The elaborate likeness of what they have received to what they asked for is such as, all circumstances considered, no doctrine of chances or merely natural law can account for. The fulfilment is a careful portrait of the prayer. Do portraits *happen?* Are they ground out by some blind grist-mill? Of course there are many doubtful cases. Mere nature and the toss-up and whirligig of circumstances will so suffice for the explanation of some coincidences that we cannot appeal to them as proving the efficacy of prayer; but, after these have been set aside, enough are left to set our doctrine on the broadest sort of a scientific foundation, not to say on a throne. There is just now a great outcry for facts, inductions, and Bacons. We do not complain of it; we join it rather. Let these outcrying people read a few of the many books filled with detailed narratives of prayer that went straight to heaven and came back with just the things prayed for, and, if considerate and frank, they will allow that, though some of the narratives are not conclusive, there are others, and many of them, which cannot reasonably be explained save on the theory of a prayer-hearing God.

Some neglecters of prayer give no reason for their neglect; but others, and not a few in these

days, put on airs of science and declare that the *reign of law* warrants them in believing that prayer can be of no use as a means of procuring blessings.

They speak somewhat after this manner: "It is now conceded that law reigns everywhere and always. Absolutely nothing is free of its sceptre. Politics, business, domestic affairs, mind, religion—one cannot mention a single thing, however small, whether in the material or spiritual world, which is not as much subject to law as are chemical atoms and revolving planets. And the laws of nature are adamantine. They never give way, nor even give, for a single moment. 'Without variableness or shadow of turning' describes them as well as their reputed Author. The constitution of things does not alter; their modes of acting and of being acted on do not change; every event takes place under the stress of forces perfectly fixed in their natures and methods of working. Consequently the natural sequence of things is never disturbed. What will happen to-morrow or next year or a thousand years hence is foreordained in the unchanging nature of things, and is just as sure and settled a matter as any event of yesterday. It is necessary that it should be so. There must be opportunity for science. Human life must have something solid to depend upon.

The various parts of great nature are so grooved and tongued, so mortised and dovetailed into one another, that a break in one means a break in all. When a full, swift river breaks through its banks, or a train of cars leaps from the rails, we expect disaster; so we must look for still greater disaster if at any time the great forces of nature break away from their tracks and channels. To suppose that anything we can say will induce the Creator to break up the order of nature which, for wise reasons, he has himself established, is to suppose that he can be brought to work for us not only a miracle, but an unwise and self-stultifying miracle."

Sufficient answer to this objection from the reign of law is that it is equally good against the efficacy of prayer as between man and man. Does a man who grants me a favor which I have asked him for necessarily violate a law of nature? From the foundation of the world has any human being interfered with the reign of law by conferring a favor in answer to prayer? If successful petitions mean the downbreak of law, then law lies in ruins all over the world—indeed, can hardly be said to have ever reigned on the planet within the human period, the cases of successful petitions having been so immensely numerous always and everywhere.

Children abound in successful petitions. "May I have this?" "Will you let me go to my play?" And so on. Though the answer which the child gets is often a negative, it is also often an affirmative. He gets what he asked. Is the order of nature wrecked? Suppose our philosopher should say to a child caught in the act of begging a favor from his father, "You foolish boy! I am ashamed of you. Do you not know that everything is settled in the bonds of law from the foundation of the world, if not earlier, and that, in order to gratify you, your father will have to work a miracle? How absurd in you to ask him to do what he cannot do!" Do men talk to children in this vein? And when the children have gotten what they asked, are they sadly told that they have gotten a disastrous miracle? Why, then, are God's children talked to in this way? Is he the only father who cannot say and do "Yes" to the prayers of his little ones without upsetting the order of nature?

In a school the pupils often bring requests to their teacher—for explanations, for indulgences, and so on. Suppose one of our philosophers should say to one of these petitioning pupils, "My boy, I am disappointed in you. You are old enough to know better. Do you not know that educational matters, as well as all others, are

held fast in the grip of unchangeable law; that law jealously guards the whole coast of being, and allows none to land save her own children; that your teacher cannot grant what you ask without working a miracle, and a bad one at that?" Do men talk to man's pupils in this way? And after the pupils have got what they asked, as they so often do, are they told with affrighted faces that great nature is out of joint almost or quite beyond setting? Why, then, is this told to God's scholars when they are found asking him for light and guidance on dark subjects and in dark ways? Is he the only teacher who cannot say and do "Yes" to the asking souls who are in course of training under him without breaking down the reign of law?

Suppose the philosopher should say to the ten thousand office-seekers who are asking positions from princes and presidents and prosperous business firms, "I never saw such unreasonable conduct. Stop all that, in the name of common sense and accepted science! Do you not know that it is agreed on all hands among scientific men that law reigns in politics and business as thoroughly as among planets and atoms; that the assignments of postoffices and clerkships, as well as of places in the Cabinet, are all determined in the very constitution of things from their very beginning, if indeed they ever had a beginning? The

great machine, having a fixed nature and structure, can turn out certain products and no others. Do you suppose that the President will or can break up the constitution and course of nature for you?" Do men talk in this way to those who are knocking at the doors of the White House as if they would beat them down? And when they find the applicant gaining what he applied for, and becoming Mr. Secretary or Mr. Collector or Mr. Commissioner, as very often happens, do these enlightened objectors insist upon it that miracles have been wrought and that all the foundations of the earth are out of course? Why, then, do they talk in this sage vein to their fellow-subjects in God's kingdom who are found asking favors of their King? Is his the only government which cannot say and do "Yes" to petitioning subjects without breaking the sceptre and overturning the throne of law?

If it would be ridiculous for one to talk after such a fashion in regard to the petitions that pass, and successfully pass, in such profusion between men, is it wise for him to talk in the same way about God, as if He cannot grant a prayer without throwing the universe into confusion and laying violent hands on his own rules? Is he the only person who is so fettered that he cannot or must not grant a petition?

In fact, neither man nor God is under the necessity of setting aside natural law in order to answer prayer. Neither has to do more than I do when I cast a stone upward. I overcome the force of gravity by my superior force. And we all bring about events every day by using natural laws and forces—by guiding them, by combining and resolving them; in short, by governing other forces that were made to be governed by our superior force. So God may do, only of course in an infinitely greater degree. He can do it without even suspending a single law for a single moment. That he actually does so we are bound to believe, unless we would defy the natural presumptions of the case, the manifold teachings of the Bible, the science of Christian experience, and the general voice of mankind in all times and lands.

What is this doctrine of prayer that has in its favor such a great consensus? Not that prayer always secures its object, not that it can ever be relied on to bring that object immediately, but that, in addition to its general moral and religious influence on the character of the petitioner, it avails much to secure in some suitable time and way the suitable specific things asked for. This is the doctrine that deserves to be true and that has the consent of all the sacred books and creeds

and traditions; that is to say, of either human nature itself, with all its outcrying instincts and needs, or of that primeval revelation at the knee of which the lisping infancy of our race was taught to join its hands to pray.

And what says this doctrine to prayerless people? There are some such in Christian lands. They rise from their beds without prayer and compose themselves to sleep without it. They ask many things from earth, but never anything from heaven. Days come and go, years melt into years, enterprises are begun and prosecuted and finished, perplexities, emergencies, prosperities, and adversities succeed one another through all the checkered scene, and yet not a single petition Godward in behalf of this world or the next goes up from their lips or hearts. I mistake; there is an emergency that sometimes brings these people to their knees. Let their boat upset or their car go plunging down a precipice; in short, let them be called to look death squarely and closely in the eye, and they will be very apt to cry to God for help, as did Volney on stormy Lake Erie. The human nature within them cries out almost before they are aware. But for the most part and for years together their asking goes out only towards men. Is there any God? To look at these men one would hardly think it.

What shall be said to them? That they are in a minority? That they are in a wonderful minority? That they are in a minority so small as to be practically inappreciable in both present and historic times? In most things and with men the general example counts for much. Fashion is a dictator. Among Romans we are apt to do as Romans do. In dress, in furniture, in manners, in language, in opinions even, we are prone to go with the tremendous majorities. What everybody does everybody wants to do. But these prayerless people stand against a world. They say *No* where almost everybody says *Yes*. Why is it? Is prayer one of the labors of Hercules? Few things are easier. The feeblest and simplest and busiest can pray. Neither genius nor learning nor wealth nor goodness is needed, only sincerity. And then, while prayer cannot possibly do any harm, it promises to do a world of good, all mankind being its mouthpiece. Under such circumstances prayerlessness seems inexcusable. The presumptions are against it; the "sweet reasonableness" is against it; an imperial Christian experience is against it; the suffrages of humanity are against it. In neglecting prayer a man neglects to use in his own behalf what all the world has always felt to be one of the greatest forces open to man for accomplishing his ends, and very

likely does it for a reason which in the case of other great forces would not be allowed any weight, namely, that it often does not when used bring us what we want. The use of other forces, say electricity or steam, involves danger. It may even destroy us. But the force we call prayer is sure to do no harm if it does no good. The Supreme is not likely to be angered by the compliment of a devout recognition of his sovereignty and power. But let us throw aside all the *ifs* and declare in the strength of the great consensus that such a recognition promises vast advantages which no man can afford to miss.

But it is not the prayerless merely that need to hearken to the consensus. Let certain praying people consider their ways. They pray morning and night without fail; for aught I know they pray seven times a day; but their prayers do not seem to them instruments for the accomplishment of definite purposes. They feel that praying is a thing to be done, that it is a necessary part of the equipment of a Christian man, that it belongs to the sacred routine which for some good reason has been appointed them; but as to any distinct idea of getting by their asking what they ask for, they are quite vacant of it. And, somehow, their nature does not abhor the vacuum. They are quite easy under it. They do not expect answers to

prayer that can be recognized as such. They would be surprised to get them. Their praying is all machine-work. They wound themselves up for this sort of work some years ago, and they continue to run, without any particular interest or aim in the matter, as regular as a machine and almost as purposeless.

These persons should wake up. Such wooden praying is not of the paying sort. It is not adapted to get specific answers because it does not thoroughly mean what it says. If these praying-machines would take to themselves soul, and would ask God for favors as they do men—that is, with a distinct aim and effort to get them by the asking—they would find it a very profitable way of expending breath and time. As between man and man, prayer is an instrument for getting what we want. It is the same as between man and God. That it is not always successful in gaining its object should no more prevent its being used than like failures should prevent our using ploughs and harrows. Do these always bring a crop? No; but they look and work in that direction; and the man who uses them faithfully for years finds that he has been prospered as he never would have been if he had trusted to the spontaneous products of the soil.

# VI. INFALLIBLE ORACLES.

Deity with his own right hand points out our way.

ARATUS.

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The law of God has two divisions—the one written, the other unwritten. DIOG. LAERT.

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Believing all things written in the law and the prophets.

ST. PAUL.

# VI. INFALLIBLE ORACLES.

THE Assyrians, Babylonians, Greeks, Romans, and other ancient peoples who had no sacred books nevertheless held that deity had sent messages to men by haruspices, priests, sybils; by dreams, omens, supernatural voices, inspirations. And the original message was always supposed to represent *perfectly* the thought of the deity from whom it came. It might be marred in passing through second and third hands; but the message at first hand, whether in this way or that, whether by responses of oracles (as at Delphi and Dodona) or by the teaching of priesthoods supposed to be official custodians of sacred knowledge and mouthpieces of divinity, whether relating to fact or doctrine or practice, was accepted as, in every particular, as truthful and authoritative as the divinity himself.

Similar to these are the views generally taken of the sacred books now extant in the world by those who accept them as sacred. They are thought to be not only messages from the supernatural, but also messages that are as infallible on all matters of which they affirm as the super-

natural itself. More especially is this thought of the original documents.

Max Müller writes of the Rig-Veda as follows: "According to the orthodox views of Indian theologians, not a single line of the Veda was the work of human authors. The whole Veda is, in some way or other, the work of deity; and even those who received the revelation or, as they explain it, those who saw it, were not supposed to be ordinary mortals, but beings raised above the level of ordinary humanity and less liable to error, therefore, in the reception of revealed truth. The views entertained of revelation by the orthodox theologians of India are far more minute and elaborate than those of the most extreme advocates of verbal inspiration in Europe. The human element is driven out of every corner and hiding-place; and, as the Veda is held to have existed in the mind of the deity before the beginning of time, every allusion to historical events, of which there are not a few, is explained away with a zeal and ingenuity worthy of a better cause. If the laws of Manu, or any other work of authority, can be proved on any point to be at variance with a single passage of the Veda, their authority is at once overruled."

The Koran is held by Mohammedans to have descended entire from heaven on the "night of

power," and to have been faithfully translated by Mohammed with divine help. According to the Mormons, the "Book of Mormon" was divinely written (every word of it) on plates of gold, and then the whole literally done into English with absolutely perfect accuracy by Joseph Smith, under a divine inspiration.

As to the Tripitaka of the Buddhists, the Avesta of the Persians, the Kings of Confucius, the Tao-te-King of the Taoists, the Sutras of the Gains, the Granth of the Sikhs—they are all, like the Veda and the Koran, reverenced by their respective votaries as pure truth without the least mixture of error. Whatever they assert is to be taken without question, whatever it may seem to contradict. Be the matter great or small, it makes no difference. An infallible judge has spoken. Nothing remains to be said. There is no higher court of appeal.

It is well known that the Jews as a nation have always held to a plenary inspiration of the Old Testament. In their view, the writings of Moses and of the other prophets, as they came from the first hands, were altogether free from mistakes. Not only each sentence, but each individual word—nay, each individual letter—was a sacred thing to them. They largely wore Scripture verses as amulets on their foreheads and over

their hearts. However poorly at times they have practised their Bible, their theory in regard to it has always been of the highest sort. Just as the political motto of some nations is, "The king can do no wrong," so the national motto of Israel, from time out of mind, has been that the Law and the Prophets and the Psalms are the king of books, and a king that never errs. "How firmly," says Josephus, "we have given credit to those books of our own nation is evident from what we do; for during so many ages as have already passed no one has been so bold as either to add anything to them, to take anything from them, or to make any change in them."

Such, also, has been the view taken by Christians generally of both the Old and the New Testament. In every age of its history the Christian church at large has not only accepted them as *containing* an infallible divine message, but as *being* such a message in its original documents. No mistake whatever in any of their statements. Just as soon as one has found out what Moses and Matthew, Jeremiah and John, and the other Scripture writers actually wrote, the sole business before him is one of interpretation. The truth without any mixture of error is before him. He has only to unlock the gates of speech in order to find it. Such has always been the view of the

great body of Christians. To them the verdict of genuine Scripture on any matter whatever has been perfectly decisive. Whatever they could prove by it was proved absolutely. Nothing remained to be said. They hushed their controversies. They bowed even to the ground before the majesty of "Thus saith the Lord." They counted the man a heretic, not to say a blasphemer, who could come near saying, "Moses spoke here only the myths of his time," or, "Matthew doubtless was misled as to the facts in this case by his vocation as a publican," or, "Paul's reasonings at this point are inconclusive." Such language has sometimes been ventured on by men calling themselves Christians, especially in Germany; but it has always been heard with a shudder by the great Christian communions.

So the bulk of mankind have agreed in these two things: first, that the world has a message from the supernatural; and, second, that this message as first delivered was in every particular as reliable as the source from which it came.

What means this great plebiscitum? What means this universal faith in an infallible message from the supernatural, this chain of such faiths stretching away back into the mists of history and even the adyta of primeval tradition, this chain that never lessens or weakens as it passes

through the more enlightened times and lands? Have we not here the instinctive judgments of mankind as to what sort of a divine message mankind needs and is likely to receive? Have we not here, perhaps, a divine testimony to the fathers of the race, so emphatic and so agreeable to what one would expect that it has followed the race in all its dispersions and generations down to the present time with unfailing constancy?

It cannot be denied that universal beliefs are not always just. But they are very apt to be—so apt that in practical life they are always accepted as just, in the absence of all positive evidence to the contrary. This point I have fully illustrated elsewhere. Suffice it now to say that the fact or the philosophy that is witnessed to by the general voice of mankind confessedly deserves great respect with logicians, and usually gets what it deserves; occupies a vantage-ground from which a considerable force will be required to dislodge it—especially if the great world-voice does not waver, but rather grows firmer as it issues from the lips of the wiser and better peoples, and especially if it cannot be thought suggested by superficial appearances, like the notion generally held in the past that the heavens make a daily circuit about the earth. And such is the voice under consideration. Its vast chorus of testimony

to a divine message at least as infallible as the source from which it comes speaks forth a weighty presumption. Of two things in all other respects equal, that which has in its favor the suffrages of mankind at large would be universally conceded to have greatly the advantage of its fellow. In the present case, since we have even more than the lack of positive evidence that the wide suffrage comes from the weak and perverse in human nature (from its ignorance and depravity), it is but fair to think that it comes from the better elements; that it comes from the pressure of the actual fact as revealed, or as shining by its own light in the universal, though sometimes dim, sense of what man needs to receive and God needs to give.

This general consent of the world as to the degree of inspiration belonging to a divine message is fortified, so far as our Scriptures are concerned, by another consensus.

The general voice of the Christian church, of which we have spoken, is entitled to great weight. With insignificant exceptions, Christians have always held that, by means of a divine influence, the original Scripture documents were secured from error in all their teachings of whatever kind; so that their verdict on any matter was perfectly authoritative and final. Has an undoubted can-

onical passage pronounced upon it? Then it is *settled* beyond dispute. Let no one open his mouth further. No matter how trivial the subject may seem, no matter what the topic, whether fact or doctrine, whether sacred or secular, whether prose or poetry, whether chronology or history or science or religion, all debate is cut off. All heads bow silently to the judge that ends the strife. Let no one presume to utter or think against that verdict, distinguishing between great and small, important and unimportant, religious and secular. "Such," says Rawlinson, "has been the teaching of the church of Christ from the first."

A presumption (is it not a great deal more?) that the original Scriptures were accurate in even their smallest statements is given by the fact that a multitude of minute and seemingly least important Biblical statements, even in our often translated and copied Bible, have been verified by the exploration of recent times; while in no case has any undoubted Biblical statement been shown to be incorrect—whether it be historical, topographical, ethnological, ethnographical, or scientific; for, strange as it may seem, there may be very small scientific matters.

Perhaps the most satisfactory way, as it certainly is the most economical one as regards time

and space, of substantiating this assertion is to cite the testimony of one of the most illustrious, learned, and conscientious of modern scholars as found in Rawlinson's "Historical Evidences." This work contains the following statements: "My own studies, which have lain for the last eight or nine years almost exclusively in the field of ancient history, have convinced me more and more of the thorough truthfulness and faithful accuracy of the historical Scriptures. Circumstances have given me an intimate knowledge of the whole course of recent cuneiform and (to some extent) of hieroglyphical discovery; and I have been continually struck with the removal of difficulties, the accession of light, the multiplication of minute points of agreement between the sacred and profane, resulting from the advances made in deciphering the Assyrian, Babylonian, Persian, and Egyptian records.

"There is an argument of immense compass deducible from the indirect and incidental points of agreement between the Mosaic records and the best profane authorities. And this is an argument to which modern research is perpetually adding fresh weight. Above all, the absence of any counter-evidence, the fact that each accession to our knowledge of the ancient times, whether historic or geographic or ethnic, helps to remove

difficulties and to produce a perpetual supply of fresh illustrations of the Mosaic narrative, while fresh difficulties are not at the same time brought to light, all tends to show that we possess in the Pentateuch not only the most authentic account of ancient times that has come down to us, but a history absolutely and in every respect true.

"It is not possible to produce from authentic history any contradiction of this or any other portion of the Hebrew records. When such a contradiction has seemed to be found it has invariably happened that, in the progress of historical inquiry, the author from whom it proceeds has lost credit and finally come to be regarded as an utterly untrustworthy authority.

"It is evident that the entire historical framework in which the gospel is set is real; that the facts of the civil history, small and great, are true. To suppose that there is this minute historical accuracy in all the accessories of the story and that the story itself is mythic is absurd.

"A comparison of its secondary or incidental facts with the civil history of the times as otherwise known to us reveals an agreement so multitudinous and so minute as to constitute, in the eyes of all those who are capable of weighing historical evidence, an overwhelming argument in proof of the authenticity of the whole story."

Such are the testimonies. We have in them the fruit of years of scholarly investigation condensed into a pemmican of honest statement. We may safely say that it correctly represents the facts. That minute accuracy, in even the most assailed parts of the Scriptures, to which it testifies, in regard to all the numerous points of the past which modern researches have thus far been able to uncover, is sufficient warrant for assuming their accuracy at all other points. If Schliemann digs up an old helmet at Mycene and, on cleaning it at many of the least conspicuous points, finds only pure gold, is he not warranted in thinking he has a gold helmet? If one should find in ancient Chaldæa or at Travancore a chart of the heavens, and, on testing it by thousands of stars of all sizes, taken at random from all parts of the sky, should find them all correctly placed, would he not feel entitled to assume the correctness of the chart throughout? It would be folly to require him to verify by actual measurement every single stellar position. Not a star-chart in the world has been verified in this way. And yet the Berlin charts are built on confidently in every observatory and nautical almanac in both hemispheres. If it is scientific to do this, why is it not scientific to allow a like broad induction of facts to convince us of the accuracy of the entire orig-

inal Scriptures on all matters of which they speak, without regard to the science of magnitude?

And, then, the Scriptures claim entire trustworthiness for themselves—claim it after the broadest and most exacting fashion.

As to the New Testament. Its various books were written by the immediate disciples of Christ. This fact is on the face of most of the books and has the support of uncounteracted tradition. To deny it is practically to deny that we can know who were the authors of any ancient books, or even of very modern ones. So the New Testament was written by the immediate disciples of Christ.

Now this Book testifies that Christ commissioned his immediate disciples to become the religious teachers of mankind; that he promised the Holy Spirit to thoroughly qualify them for their work; that on particular occasions (as when brought before magistrates, and on that day of Pentecost when they preached in tongues unknown to themselves) the very words and syntax of their message were divinely supplied to them; that, in short, they were so furnished for their work that their Master could say to them, "He that heareth you heareth me," and, "It is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of my Father that speaketh in you;" and so that Paul could say, "We

speak not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth." While making such representations, the sacred writers give no vague hint whatever that they may be unreliable to some extent in minor matters; not a word, even the slightest, that any discount whatever should be made from their unqualified teachings, either oral or written, in the exercise of their ministry. Under these circumstances the primitive Christians must have felt bound to accept, without exception, whatever these broadly-commissioned teachers gave them as from the Master, especially in formal writings designed to be a text-book of religion to all future times. If anything from Christ's immediate disciples was *ex cathedra*, such a text-book was. To reject a large part of it under color of a vague distinction between things primary and secondary, things more and less important, things religious and semi-religious or secular, without any distinct boundary-line between the two, would have been as unnatural as unwarrantable—in fact, would logically have put their whole Scripture under suspicion and shadow and set it a-trembling like an aspen. As a matter of history, as we have seen, the church has never received the New Testament after such a fractional, discounting, and confusing a fashion. As far back as church opin-

ion can be traced a plain Scripture on any point whatever, great or small in seeming, has been held absolutely decisive. It has had always the prerogative of the last word.

As to the Old Testament. Its absolute and entire trustworthiness has sufficient proof in the attitude of Christ and the New Testament towards it. Not only is it called the "Holy Scriptures," the "Word of God," the "Oracles of God;" not only are its writers spoken of as "holy men of God who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost," while no hint whatever is given that certain parts are to be taken "*cum grano salis*," and that the common Jewish opinion in regard to it needed to be somewhat lowered; not only does the New Testament do this, but Paul says that he believes "*all things* written in the law and the prophets;" while the Master himself declares that "not one jot or tittle of the law (at least the five books of Moses) shall fail," and that "whosoever shall break one of these least commandments (facts in the form of precepts), and shall teach men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven."

Evidently the writers of the New Testament, as well as their Master, in quoting from the Old Testament, regarded a matter as *settled* when they could bring to bear on it a clear passage from their

Bible—this without regard to topic or seeming magnitude. They did not think it necessary to measure carefully its true dimensions, or estimate its weight and quality to remote decimals, before accepting the Bible deliverance concerning it.

If the sacred writers had only a partial inspiration, were open to mistake in a part of their deliverances, they were bound in all honesty to say as much and to put their readers on their guard. They should have said for substance, "We are inspired and secured from error as to *main* things, but as to other matters we are like other people." But, instead of this, their claim to be received as bringing a divine message is entirely unqualified. It is couched in the broadest and most emphatic terms. Not a whisper, not a gesture, not a look even, of warning comes to us from any one of the sacred writers either in regard to himself or to his brethren of the canon; but, on the contrary, such language and tone are used as must have been understood to indorse completely the current opinion of the time, and indeed of all times, as to sacred books. If a part of the ground we have to travel over is morass and liable to let us through at every step, though there are no surface indications of the fact, let the authorities at least set up by the road some notifica-

tion of danger, that we may be on the alert. Let them put out somewhere a red light.

This is what Paul is supposed by some to have done. In one or two instances he is thought to express some hesitation as to whether, in regard to certain matters, he has "the mind of the Spirit." But his scrupulousness as to these specified matters assures us that he felt sure as to the divine authority of all his other statements, which received no qualification whatever: assures us that if any of them had been open to doubt he would have given fair warning: in fact, assures us that the other sacred writers, under similar circumstances, would have done as much. The fact that they suggest no doubt whatever is proof that they entertained none.

So much as to what the Scriptures claim for themselves. Now let us see what consequences are involved in adopting the alternative theory of inspiration, viz., that the original Scriptures were infallible only in main things.

This theory seems to open the door for nullifying a large part of the Bible. Main things in a book, as well as in everything else, are always in a minority, a very small minority. The details and circumstantials of a picture always occupy the most space, by far the most. Besides, it is no easy matter to decide where "main" things end

and the secondary and subordinate begin. They shade away into each other as day does into night. Different men would draw the dividing line very differently. There are those who regard the Deity of Christ, his atonement, his mediation, regeneration, a future state of rewards and punishments, as anything but essential to a scheme of reasonable religion. And, then, do not things seemingly very small often turn out to have very important connections—a little pivot proving essential to the integrity and working of a great engine? Sermons, and even books, can be written on the importance of little things. Whether or not the cackling of geese once saved Rome, it is proverbial that the weight of a feather sometimes decides a hesitating balance or battle, and that a last straw may break a camel's back. Such facts trouble us when we are trying to distinguish between the important and unimportant, the more important and the less, in Scripture. It *looks* small; but then may it not be the small rudder that steers some "tall admiral," and so a whole squadron of dependent ships; or a small seed which in time will wave harvests over half a continent? So a cloud of uncertainty settles down on by far the larger part of the Bible. We cannot accept a single verse as infallible until we have proved it to be highly important; and then what room for dif-

ferent views as to what *is* important! Almost everywhere the ground under our feet seems to be on a tremble. What our fathers thought to be a rock turns out to be a bog. Can it be that God has given us such a revelation?

If the contemporaries of the original Scripture documents had found them unreliable in regard to the larger part of their statements, even though these statements were of the circumstantial and secondary sort, would they not have been reasonably stumbled as to the rest? Could they well have been blamed for withholding confidence from the entire thing? It would have been the scientific thing to do. In similar circumstances we moderns would feel compelled by universally accepted laws of evidence to do it.

But the theory that the original Bible was infallible only in main things contradicts the theory on which Biblical scholars proceed in dealing with the text of Scripture. The whole effort of textual critics is to find out what the autographs were. This is considered immensely important, the great *desideratum*, deserving of almost unlimited pains. And indeed so say all devout scholars and the intelligent Christian public, for they feel that the nearer they get to the autographs the nearer they get to the exact truth. But all parties are mistaken if only "the more important"

Bible statements have a divine warrant. In that case by far the larger part, say ninety-nine hundredths of the whole Scripture, is not one whit more trustworthy than the copies made from them; indeed less so, as being the product of a less critical and enlightened age. What is the use of scholars worrying themselves about the genuineness of secondary matters when, even if proved genuine, they would be of no account as Scripture? The latest variations are at least fully as likely to be correct as the originals. As a whole the Bible has sunk to the level of other books; Samson and Milo are as other men. So far as getting at the truth is concerned, the critics have accomplished just nothing by all their labors. They have wasted any amount of time, talent, toil. Their rummagings in old monasteries, their disinterment of codices, cursive and uncial, their collations and recensions innumerable, their science of textual criticism and cognates, elaborated with infinite labor in closets and convocations and revision committees, amount to nothing that the general Christian public values one jot. Such a public has little patience with this much ado about nothing. Why do they spend money for that which is not bread? "The game is not worth the candle." Their true course would be first to find (if that is possible) what are the main

or more important passages in our present Bibles, and then confine inquiries to the question of *their* genuineness. As these, from the nature of the case, can be only a small fraction of the whole, an immense saving of time and work would be effected.

But some prefer to speak of inspiration as belonging only to the "moral and religious" parts of the Bible. We complain of the vagueness of such language. What is meant by the words "moral and religious"? Plainly, not everything that can be made to yield moral and religious lessons, for that would include not only everything found in the Bible, but also everything in every other book and in the whole world of events. From stars to stones, from the motions of armies to those of atoms, religion may be argued into or away from them all. Are duties, together with their underlying doctrines, meant? In that case it is plain that there is a vast amount of matter in the Bible that cannot be clearly brought under either of these heads. Duties depend largely on facts and circumstances; if the latter are unreliable, the former are so also to the same extent. Also, beyond a certain point it becomes doubtful what doctrines underlie given duties. A field for endless dispute opens. The entire Bible becomes debatable ground, a sort of Terra del Fuego of

fogs and clouds and desperate uninhabitableness the whole miserable year round.

But what do they really have in their thought, these men who speak of inspiration as belonging solely to the moral and religious things of the Bible? They certainly do not mean the whole Bible; they mean *limitation.* And we have only to listen to them a little to see that they mean to exclude from the area of infallible inspiration matters of historic detail, of manners and customs, of arts, sciences, and chronology; in general and vaguely, all matters of the "less important" sort that fill up the outlines of Scripture, that make the flesh and blood and bloom that cover its skeleton and give it verisimilitude. But it is not altogether easy to tell when one comes to the skeleton. And certainly what is outside of it would, in the view of most people, include the greater part of the Bible, especially of the Old Testament; and rightly, for it is impossible to prove *clearly*, on purely rational grounds (to which, of course, we must be confined), that most of the Bible statements have any closer connection with morals and religion than have those in our common histories, or those events in our daily lives which yield moral and religious lessons to so few. A few devout and ingenious minds will smite water out of rock and command the very stones into

bread; but to most people they will remain mere stones.

So an open door is left for a man to exclude from the inspired matter of the Bible whatever he wishes. To some, God and religion appear in everything; to others, they appear in almost nothing. The great majority are slow to perceive the spiritual and religious in what passes under their observation. A few see sermons in stones; but the most see stones in sermons. Who does not know that God and religion are apt to remain unsuggested to most men even by his grandest works and most signal providences? Such persons would find in the Bible a minimum of the moral and religious and a maximum of the other sort.

Further, it seems clear that the theory that the original Bible was infallible only in main things, or, if you please, in things moral and religious, would, if fairly understood and adopted by the people at large, completely destroy the authority of the Scriptures among them. Suppose a minister should stand up in his pulpit, and holding up a Bible should say to his congregation, "This book originally contained here and there, at great intervals, something that was divine and not open to mistake; but men have never been able to say with any confidence, save in a few instances, just

where these green spots are; and as for the rest (by far the greater part of the whole), why, it is as purely human and fallible as any common book. Indeed, this book has a special drawback in being the product of comparatively very uncritical and unenlightened times." I say suppose our clergy should talk after this fashion to their people. What would come of it? Doubtless at first a wide opening of the eyes. "We have heard strange things to-day, things which neither we nor our fathers have known. But one thing is clear, if these ministers are right they no longer have a vocation. A clear divine warrant for their function and support can no longer be pleaded. We can dispense with them. That will be a very considerable and acceptable economy. But *are* these views correct?" Just as soon as the people conclude to say Yes, how much weight will the Bible have with them? It will no longer be to them a Bible at all. Its prestige is all gone. The sceptre has fallen from its hand. It is wholly without authority—its promises a mirage, its penalties a *brutum fulmen.* It may continue to interest as an heirloom, a piece of antiquity, a literary curiosity, a companion volume to the books of Confucius and Zoroaster, a book with a somewhat famous history; but as an authoritative rule of faith and practice it will have no force whatever.

The only sceptre left in the hand of Christ will be a mocking reed. Such a book could not answer the purpose of a divine message. It is not such a revelation as the world needs. It is incredible that God has given such a thing to the world under a warrant of "signs and wonders." It would not be worth the giving.

To the doctrine of the inerrancy of the original Scriptures the following objections may be made:

1. Many trivialities, puerilities, and even some indecencies are found in all copies of the Scriptures, and so presumably belonged to the originals: can it be that the inspiration which did not secure against such things secured against error in even the smallest matters?

We admit that there are things in the Bible that *seem*, at first view, to be all these—things the use of which we do not see, and even things which propriety, according to present usage, forbids to be publicly read. But this is only what we observe in nature. Nature abounds in things that seem trivial, and in some that will not bear promiscuous exhibition. Every natural fact has a setting of small particulars, and must be given in more or less of its natural setting in order to verisimilitude. Also, things seemingly very trifling often turn out to be pivotal, like some of the small and obscure but yet essential parts of a watch.

Also, times and countries differ much in their ideas of what is indelicate; and the expressions in the Bible which are complained of are no worse than the facts, and are really no more suggestive of evil than the words "male and female," "fornication," "adultery," and many other such words in current and unblamed use among us, and which are indispensable in the fight against vice and crime. It is quite credible that certain physiological facts which the young *must* learn sooner or later had better be first learned in sacred connections and as set amid the solemn sanctions and menaces of religion.

2. What is the use of having the original Scriptures more secured from error than the copies? The copies are to a certain extent fallible. This implies fallibility to a like extent in the originals; for what is the use of having them more accurate?

We answer: It is the use of having a perfectly solid foundation for a great edifice; of having a perfectly pure fountain to supply the successive reservoirs and pipes of a great city; of having a perfect standard of weights or measures to which to refer for verification; of having a final court of appeals able to revise the proceedings of all other courts, and decide cases righteously as well as finally.

We answer: It is the use of having a Bible more reliable than merely human commentaries on it or than the intelligent faculties of the readers. If there is no use in having the original documents less fallible than the copies, then, on the same principle, there is no use in having the copies less fallible than are its uninspired readers and interpreters. As these are all fallible according to our Protestant view, the Bible at once sinks to the level of a fallible human production.

We answer: It is the use of having a Bible mainly secure from error, instead of a Bible mainly open to error; the use of having a Bible whose deliverances are unreliable only in an infinitesimal part of the whole, and that part providentially indicated to us and guaranteed to be inconsequential, instead of one whose deliverances are unreliable in almost every part and on almost every point.

If only the copies are liable to error, then we have to discount from the infallibility of the book only at the points where the copies so differ among themselves as to make it hard to choose between them; but if the original Scriptures were themselves liable to error in all secondary matters, then (as such matters make up by far the greater part of every book, and it is no easy matter after a cer-

tain point to distinguish between things primary and secondary) the greater part of the Bible passes under a cloud.

This, then, seems the proper doctrine. The original Scriptures, as they came fresh from the hands of the sacred penmen, were infallible in all their statements of whatever sort. One asks whether this doctrine implies a strictly verbal inspiration, a divine giving of each particular word with its collocation. Not necessarily. If in any case there is only one best way of saying what needs to be said, then that way must be secured by a strictly verbal inspiration. But wherever there are several such ways, ways equally good of saying the same thing (and this, it would seem, must often happen), it is enough if the sacred writer is kept to any one of these ways. Within their range he is at liberty to choose his own words and his own syntax. He is not limited to specific individuals, only to a specific class. That is, *some* divine direction as to words must always exist, but in many cases this need not extend to the dictation of individual words with their collocation. As a traveller may have the choice of several roads to a city instead of being shut up to a single one; as a planet may vary its orbit considerably between fixed terms, instead of always traversing exactly the same line; as a prisoner

may have the range of an entire house or city or province, instead of being confined to a single cell, so the sacred writers had a certain range of literary expression within which they could not go amiss or fall short of the best, instead of having their feet fast in the stocks of a single formula. They were not like the king around whom a Roman ambassador drew closely a circle which must not be crossed till an answer had been given, but rather like that king as he would have been if that circle had followed the whole round of the city walls.

*Our present Scriptures are, practically, faithful copies of the originals.*

In by far the greater part of the Scripture text the copies agree with one another. This larger part is therefore like the originals. So we judge in the case of all other ancient books. What all the copies of Herodotus conspire in saying, Herodotus himself said.

At points where the copies disagree with one another textual criticism can, in a great number of cases, determine what was the original text beyond all reasonable doubt. This is a modest statement. No doubt extravagant claims have often been made as to what the science of textual criticism can do. "Never such a detective! It can hunt down a rogue of an error through all the

centuries and find it under all disguises." But, without going such lengths, without conceding omniscience or infallibility to this or any other class of scientists, we are bound to allow that sound principles exist which enable scholars in a multitude of cases satisfactorily to determine, among rival readings, that which is genuine. So we may make a large addition to the likeness between our present Bible and the original documents.

As to the residuum after the resources of criticism for determining the genuine have been exhausted, we find it to be exceedingly small, largely inconsequential to all appearance, actually (as all Christian scholars agree) bringing into doubt no single item of doctrine or duty, and fully accounted for without supposing in our present Bibles any whit of abatement from the authority and usefulness of the original Scriptures.

For, to preserve this authority and usefulness, it is not necessary that every word or even every construction of the original be preserved. In many cases there are several equally good ways of saying the same thing. An author is often at a loss which to choose among the different modes of expression that occur to him. He cannot see but that one is just as clear and forcible as another. And if his name is Thomas Chalmers, he

may end his hesitation by using them all. Seventeen reproductions of the same idea have been counted in one of his paragraphs, each differing from every other in language, and all just, forcible, and brilliant. Just as the same person may appear to equal advantage in several different dresses, so a thought may not suffer in the least from having one form of expression exchanged for another. So Jesus and the writers of the New Testament evidently thought; for in their quotations from the Old Testament they are not always careful to use the exact words of even the Septuagint. They content themselves with giving what they regard as equivalent expressions. So the Decalogue as given in Deuteronomy differs verbally somewhat from that given in Exodus. The sense is the same; the dress varies. Evidently the sacred writers themselves were not in bondage to the letter. They certainly thought that in some cases there were two or more equally good ways of saying the same thing; even as the same pure water may come to us in vessels of many shapes and materials. If this is so, we can fully account for a considerable part of the residual passages just spoken of without supposing that the Bible has suffered in the slightest from our inability to reproduce exactly the originals. The substitutes may be just as good as the primaries

for all Scriptural purposes. Just as the substitute whom a man sends into the army may do quite as good service as himself, and the army be none the worse for the exchange.

But the residuum does not consist entirely of passages giving the same thought under different forms. Some give different senses. But can it be that it may be of no earthly consequence which of these various senses is taken as the original? Even so. All the *facts* of the original, as well as all its words, may not need to be preserved from mistake and doubt in order to its being preserved from damage. Many facts may be stated merely as the actual dress and circumstantials of other facts, as the flesh and blood required to make the skeleton of truth lifelike and presentable, as the filling-in of the outlines of the picture for the purpose of naturalness and verisimilitude. For this purpose other facts of a similar order might serve equally well. For example, 968 years as the age of Methuselah might do as well as 969 years. It is true that, for reasons already stated, it would be a hard matter for *us* to draw the line between important and unimportant variations; but that there *may* be unimportant ones is plain, and what they are would be determined by what God allows to take place. We do not have to draw the line. He draws it for us.

Besides facts which merely serve to give verisimilitude, and which may be exchanged without loss for others serving that purpose equally well, there are others of which as much can be said. Just as a fact may be useful to a person at one time and not at another, so a fact may be useful to one age of the world and not to another age. It is outgrown. It is superannuated. From lapse of time and change of circumstances the use has fallen out of it. Or, if not so, its place has become well supplied by something else. Why may it not be so with some Scripture passages? For example, some passages relating to some points in the superseded Mosaic economy. If we find it impossible to determine satisfactorily the original sense of such a passage, why may we not suppose that, though once of use to be known, it is so no longer? It has had its day, or sufficient substitutes exist in other parts of Scripture. It is easy to see that no damage whatever might come to us from not being able to settle a few points like these. If we had to find them out for ourselves we should be in straits. But the providence of God steps in to help us. He marks for us the passages whose original sense it will do us no harm to be without. What he allows to become indeterminate through various readings, or whatever cause, he thereby certifies to be unim-

portant for *us*, whatever it may have been for other times.

This, then, is our theory. Words and syntaxes in Scripture, as elsewhere, may vary to a certain extent without damage to the sense. Without damage, also, the sense itself may vary somewhat. But in no case has the varying been suffered to go beyond this harmless extent without detection. What this extent is is shown by those passages in regard to which there remains a reasonable doubt of their genuineness after the resources of criticism have been exhausted upon them. Providence does for us what we could not do for ourselves. It becomes an omniscient detective. It hunts down for us both the words and the senses which can safely vary, puts its sign-manual upon them, and then says, "This is what you do not need to know, at least for the present." So we hold that, for all practical purposes, the present Bible is a faithful transcript of the original documents. After doing our best to find the words and thoughts of a passage as they stood in the autographs, and doing it unsuccessfully, we say to ourselves reasonably, "It is not of any consequence, at least for the present, that we should know. If it were, the Lord would not have suffered the text to fall into this helpless doubt."

This view is confirmed by the manner in which Christ and his apostles treated the Bible of their time. This was a translation and a copy—a copy of copies, the last survivor of many generations of copies, the last link in a long chain that had come down through the glooms and tossings of many troublous centuries. But Christ treated it as if it were an autograph. Not a hint but that it possessed all the reliability and authority of the primitive parchments. Not one word about a harmful uncertainty in a text that had passed through so many hands. What explanation of this so good as that no such harmful uncertainty existed? He had no need to caution. For all practical purposes the copy was as good as the original while yet wet under the writers' hands would have been. Divine Providence had so watched over the book that, though in the lapse of ages various changes in the text had taken place, not one of these changes was of the sort to vitiate in the slightest the book as a religious guide. So Christ, in speaking of the Septuagint Bible of his day, had no need to distinguish between it and the original autographs. He did not so distinguish. He treated both as being one and the same thing. He took it for granted that the people about him were doing the same. They were. Whatever rights belonged to

the first king they allowed to his lineal successor of their own day.

Of late years it has been given out that the progress of Biblical study has made it necessary to revise our theory of inspiration. It is said that the high ground taken by our fathers cannot be maintained. We have fallen on an age of careful and well-equipped criticism. Germany has examined and spoken. The teachings of the Westminster and other great confessions, of Gaussen and Doddridge and Edwards and Knapp, were premature, ill-considered, and must be largely modified in the light of a riper scholarship and fuller knowledge. In particular we are warned that we cannot now insist on the inerrancy of the Scriptures, even of the originals, as to historic and scientific matters and the smaller details of all sorts; that it is altogether safer and more in the line of recent findings to speak of the Scriptures as *containing* a divine message than as *being* such a message. And so we are told, perhaps with bald outspokenness and perhaps under various disguises of reverent and orthodox phrase, of the mistakes of Moses and Matthew, of Peter and Paul, and even of the Lord Jesus himself. Not a few are reluctant to speak out. They prefer to put things in a mild and unalarming way. "The old truth must have restatement to adapt it to these times."

But when we come to examine closely we find that it is not the old truth at all, but rather an old foe with a new face. What appears is a restatement; what is behind it is a mild form of infidelity, if there can be such a thing. And all in the name of the (almost) twentieth century and new light!

Pray, what *are* the new facts? What great discoveries have made necessary this great change of base? Has it just been discovered that our copies of the Scriptures differ somewhat among themselves? Has it just come to the knowledge of the public that quotations from the Old Testament by the Master and his disciples were not always in the exact original words? Was it within the present century or the last that the people found out that every sacred penman has his peculiarities of both thought and expression? Certainly such facts were as well known to the fathers as they are to us. And yet those fathers stood up for the entire infallibility of the original Scriptures, also for the practical identity of the copies in their possession with the originals. They saw no inconsistency in doing so.

Nor do we. The ancient theory does not suppose that the Bible has been kept from *all* changes, but only from all *harmful* ones; supposes that the differences between copies are, all things consid-

ered, of no consequence whatever, bringing into question not a single item of doctrine or duty. The ancient theory does not suppose that there is only one best way of saying the same thing; but, on the contrary, supposes that there may be several such ways, all equally forcible and desirable. The ancient theory does not suppose that the infallible God, who made men after so many different patterns, is not able to express infallible truth in as many different patterns of literature, each in harmony with the natural characteristics of the writer; but supposes, and has good reason to suppose, the exact contrary. Indeed, it is by no means the plainest thing in the world that the facts on which the advocates of lax theories of inspiration stumble, and which they put forward as compelling to such theories, are inconsistent with even that most exacting theory of verbal inspiration which regards the sacred writers as mere amanuenses, setting down automatically *ipsissima verba* as doled out to them by the irresistible Spirit.

# VII. IMMORTAL SOULS.

Ὥστε καὶ ἀθάνατόν τι ἔοικεν ἡ ψυχὴ εἶναι. PLATO.

So that the soul seems to be something immortal.

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Supremus ille dies non nobis extinctionem, sed commutationem affert loci. CICERO.

That last day does not bring us extinction, but change of place.

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Dies iste, quem tamquam extremum reformidas, æterni natalis est. SENECA.

That day which you dread as if the last is the birthday of eternity.

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Who are able to kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul. CHRIST.

# VII. IMMORTAL SOULS.

The Bible teaches us that in every human body dwells a spiritual being that thinks and feels and chooses, and whose existence and operations no more depend on the body which it inhabits than those of the tenant of a house do on the house. When a house, from any cause, becomes uninhabitable the tenant goes out, but goes out with all his powers unimpaired. So when the body from any cause becomes an unfit dwelling for the soul, the two part company, and the soul goes out into what we call the *future state*, but goes out with all its essential faculties unchanged. It can think and reason and imagine and remember and anticipate; can fear and hope, enjoy and suffer, love and hate; can consider and choose and resolve and execute, just as it does now—merely an evicted tenant. After the eviction the soul continues to live indefinitely. Dispossession does not mean extinction. Going out of sight does not mean going out of being. It merely means entering on a new and permanent phase of life. It may be under the happiest conditions, it may be under the most unhappy; but whether

happy or miserable, the intelligent, conscious soul will live on for ever; this, whether it is good or bad, wise or foolish, great or small. God will never extinguish the lamp which he has once lighted. It will never go out from lack of fuel. No stormy wind of painful circumstance will suddenly snuff it into darkness.

It is not necessary to cite passages in proof that such is the Scripture teaching. It is so woven into the whole texture of both the Old and the New Testament that it appears conspicuously in all the great creeds of Christendom. The duality of man as body and soul, the continued existence of the soul after the death of the body, the absolute endlessness of such existence, is everywhere expressed or implied in all the great confessions. A few individuals here and there maintain that the Bible teaches only the immortality of the good: that, though the life of the bad may be vastly prolonged, it will at last come to complete goodness or to complete extinction; but these dissenters from the general view are relatively too few to deserve notice. So they have always been. In the history of the ancient church they are represented by a single obscure man—Arnobius.

These practically universal Christian and Jewish views are repeated in the Koran and held by

all Mohammedans. And they are held by all the Eastern Asiatic nations with their hundreds of millions. The doctrine of the transmigration of souls prevails everywhere among them—a doctrine that assumes a separate spiritual agent in every man which passes at death into another body, and then into still another, and so on in perhaps innumerable transfers, till it comes to a fixed state. This fixed state is not generally supposed to be absolute extinction of being, though this was probably taught by Buddha under the name of *Nirvana*. If so, the teaching is now practically inoperative. "Human nature," says Max Müller, "could not be changed. Out of the very nothing it made a new paradise," a state of blissful absorption into the living divine essence for such as pass their various transmigrations well. But among other Orientals nothing is said of an end coming to their separate conscious existence. "In the Rig-Veda," says Max Müller, "we find a belief in immortality and in personal immortality."

In the Transactions of the Philosophical Society of Great Britain for 1885 we find the following: "When we look at a graveyard on Puget Sound and see there canoes, muskets, cloth, clothes, dishes, looking-glasses, bows and arrows, and almost everything that is valuable to an In-

dian in this life, silently yet eloquently they say one thing, that those who placed them there believed in the immortality of the soul; that, as these articles decay, they will be carried by spirits away to the deceased in the next world, there to be put together again and used. And what is thus said there is also said all over America, from the frozen regions of the North to Terra del Fuego on the South, and from the Atlantic to the Pacific, with, it is barely possible, a few exceptions, and it is not certain about these."

In the Old World, looking backward, we find Cicero writing, "That the souls of men survive the dissolution of the body we may consider as a truth sanctioned by the universal belief of all nations." Actual examination more than verifies these words. We find the old Celts and Germans and Scandinavians holding, amid many follies and errors, as firmly to a future state for man, and an endless one, as Christians do. The Greeks and Romans conceived of all human bodies as occupied by spirits who at death went away to places in the bowels of the earth, and there permanently remained—in Tartarus or the Elysian Fields—as shades, but as full of active life as ever. The tombs and other monuments of the Egyptians and Assyrians are profuse with testimonies to a future state, and to one of which no

end was imagined. According to Herodotus, "The Egyptians were the first to maintain that the soul of man is immortal."

Perhaps it seems to some that the actual lives of men show that after all they do not really believe their creeds as to the soul. How do most live? Do they live as if fully assured that their fellows, or even themselves, are of infinite value? Do they act as if their present life is of no consequence as compared with the life to come? We think that, taking the world through, men act very differently from what they would do if they thought that life ends at death. At the same time we have to allow that most people come far short of that strain of living that would be reasonable in immortal beings. How scornfully the great are apt to treat the small! In what a petty, short-sighted way do most people bear themselves! Seemingly they live solely for the present life. Seemingly they act as if there were no hereafter. To look at them one would not dream that there is anything for them beyond the grave, much less an existence that uncoils itself through endless ages. Is it possible that these people really believe that they are to live for ever? Yes, quite possible. For, see how men live in view of the death which they absolutely *know* to be certain as to fact and uncertain as to time—how carelessly,

how unwisely, how inconsistently! They cannot but grant you that they are sure to die soon and may die to-morrow, and yet they act as if they were to live here for ever. Strange! We can only say, These men know, but they do not *realize* what they know. And so we have to say in the other case. Men believe in a future state and an immortal one; but *realization* is lacking. The fact is seen, but is seen from afar. The fact is seen, but is seen as a shadow and a dwarf.

Whence this general belief of men? Is it a relic of a primitive revelation to the race so clear and emphatic that its echoes have never died away? Or is it a subtle consciousness, inherent in all men, of an interior nature whose substance lies altogether above the plane of bodily ills; which, indeed, often actually rises superior to all outward circumstances, and with sovereign look and gesture defies accident and disease and anguish in all their protean shapes, and even grimmest death itself? Or is it a blind instinct original in human nature, like the instinctive knowledge of the ways and means of living with which brutes are endowed from the outset? Or is it an easy inference from certain facts that gradually come to the knowledge of all—such as the insufficiency of the present life to meet the capacities, cravings, and needs of men as well as

the demands of divine justice? Or may there not be a natural presentiment of life as well as of death; and, as coming events sometimes cast their shadows before, and as morning and spring and returning health send out forerunners to say, "We are coming," does not his Majesty, the Future State, also have his avant-couriers and John Baptists to prepare his way in the form of hints, premonitions, presumptions, which separately are of little account, but which collectively create an atmosphere in which unbelief cannot well breathe? Whichever of these suppositions we may choose, the general belief in a future state points to a *fact*. The belief is, because the hereafter is. The subjective is crowded into being by the objective.

There is, indeed, another supposition possible. It is that the general belief in another life is one of the ancient superstitions of the world, cherished and perhaps begun by priestcraft, and bound to decay and finally disappear as knowledge advances—as other superstitions do. Yes, this is the way real superstitions do. You have only to enlarge a man's knowledge and faculties to a certain extent, and his superstitions will fall off from him as fell Peter's chains at the touch of a luminous angel. But it is not so with belief in a future state. Many a man has retained, and even enhanced it, amid the illumination of the largest

faculties and the widest knowledge. Newton was not an ignoramus, nor was Blaise Pascal. No doubt faith in a hereafter does sometimes retreat as knowledge advances, but it is not *because* of such advance. It is rather in spite of it. Dislike to the truth, superficial examination, intellectual dishonesty, prejudices of many sorts, hasty and erratic thinking in the modes perhaps of science and philosophy falsely so called—such things, and sometimes downright wickedness, are by no means unknown to men of talents and information, and are enough to "create a soul (of unbelief) under the ribs of death."

Now let us see whether this wide consent of creeds and nations and ages to a spiritual nature in man, to a future state for it, and to its endlessness, is not supported by still another consensus.

I. *As to the existence of the soul itself as a being distinct from the body.*

If thought, feeling, and choice are not due to such a being, they must result from bodily organization. But mere combination and arrangement of atoms, however elaborate, cannot generate essentially new properties—can only modify such as already exist. But among the properties belonging to material atoms our science has not yet detected any save what differ in nature, *toto orbe*, from the properties which we call spiritual. If

we know anything, we know that intelligence, purpose, sensibility, memory, consciousness, do not belong in the slightest degree to atoms of matter, but are totally different in nature from such qualities as we do know to characterize matter, e. g., gravitation, chemical affinity.

Further; if our mental operations are a product of mere matter with its forces and laws, then they are *necessary;* we cannot think, feel, or choose differently from what we do. We are no more responsible for our choices, and the actions that flow from them, than a stone is for falling or a planet for wheeling about the sun. This contradicts our consciousness and the general voice of mankind. We *know* that our wills are free, and that consequently we are blameworthy or praiseworthy. The treatment of men by one another, in all ages and countries, postulates this with a unanimity that is absolutely universal and unquestionable. We cannot admit a theory of our mental operations that implies fatalism. It were fatal to morals. It contradicts consciousness and the practical verdict of all humanity.

If one says that the mental operations are usually found to sympathize with the state of the body—to sicken as it sickens, to weaken as it weakens, to disappear as it disappears—I answer, *Yes.* But, then, this would be so if the body were

merely the instrument used by the mind. Of course, with a given agent, the worse the tool the worse the work. But there are exceptions. In cases not a few the mind seems at its best when the body is at its worst. The one brightens and strengthens as the other declines. When life is almost gone the spiritual faculties will sometimes blaze out into a vigor and splendor which they have never before shown.

Says Prof. Peabody: "I have repeatedly stood by the death-bed of one attenuated by long infirmity, every vital process clogged, the pulse intermittent, the blood already becoming stagnant; and I have seen the dying still in the full vigor of his intellect, master of his position, clearer and stronger in thought and judgment than any one of the bystanders, addressing appropriate counsel or consolation to each of the afflicted circle, dictating messages of love to the absent, and leaving no person or interest forgotten that had the remotest right to a place in his remembrance. I have heard, too, in the hour and in the embrace of death, not the feverish ecstasies of unreasoning fanaticism, but the serene utterances of a mature religious wisdom, of undoubting faith, of quiet trust, of a foreseeing hope that had already crossed the separating stream and passed within the golden gates; and in the eye kindled with a purer, ho-

lier light than ever glows except in the Christian's ascension-room, in the wan countenance radiant with the foreshining of the heavenly day, in the air of joyous expectancy with which the parting moment is waited for and welcomed, the soul's voice is, "Death, I am not thine, and I defy thy power. I am mightier than thou art. Thou art but the doorkeeper of my house not made with hands, my usher into the blessed society of the unfallen and redeemed."

Such cases are numerous. And they seem to show something more than that mind does not result from bodily organization. They strongly suggest that it can do without such organization as an instrument altogether, and is on the eve of doing it. The African missionary Adams, when near death, was like a man who, long bound to his room by the bonds of night and fatigue and sleep, at last grows restless as the approaching morning gradually relaxes his bonds, and gives unmistakable signs that he will erelong greet the full day with open eyes and outgoing feet and busy, forceful hands that will mock at the comparative indolence of the fettered state he has just left.

If the mental powers were the result of the *general* bodily organization, the most perfect and healthy bodies would show us the finest specimens

of minds. How far this is from fact everybody knows. Some feeble Pascal who has never known a well day has the mightiest soul of his generation. Some mighty brute of a body, built like a Hercules or an Apollo, is as puny in his wits as a child. When was the discovery made that all healthy and finely-proportioned people are possessed of superior abilities? No experienced person thinks it safe to infer a man's talents from the way his body is gotten up. He has no occasion to think of Æsop and Socrates and Julius Cæsar. The great grenadiers of Prussia were never heard of for any other greatness than that of their bodies.

If one supposes that mental excellence, instead of depending on the *general* excellence of the body, depends rather on that of some particular part, say on the large size, fine quality, and delicate organization of the brain, I answer that this may be and yet the brain be merely an instrument of the indwelling and distinct soul. Its manifestations, in that case, might be expected to vary largely with the excellence of the tool employed. But I answer, still further, that no part of the body has less appearance of elaborate and delicate material and structure than the brain; that the cases are many of Olympian heads with no mental forces to match (the average Polynesian skull is more ca-

pacious than the average French); and that, however it may be with many individuals, corporeal excellence in all other respects is generally associated with that of the head. The various parts tend to proportion and harmony with one another. Nature abhors disproportion and schism as much as she does a vacuum. "And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honored, all the members rejoice with it." A large and shapely trunk will commonly have over it a large and shapely head. Brobdignag shoulders object to Liliputian brains. So that, in general at least, if the materialistic theory of the soul is true, the grade of our mental faculties should be interpretable from the grade of our bodies—as it plainly is not.

It seems, then, that while the notion that the soul is not a distinct entity within the body, but, on the contrary, a genetic result of the body, or of some part of it, gets no support from the general sympathy of the mind with the body in the decay of its powers, it is negatived by the fact that the mental operations are sometimes more vigorous and brilliant than ever in the collapse of the bodily powers—even as some sunsets are more glorious than midday; also negatived by the fact that neither the general excellence of the body nor that of the head is any sure or even probable

guide as to the quality or compass of the mental powers; also, and above all, negatived by the fact that materialism means *fatalism*, and so subverts the whole foundation of morals and contradicts the consciousness of freedom and responsibility that is common to all mankind.

II. *As to the existence of the soul after the death of the body.*

If the soul is indeed an entity distinct from the body, not depending on the body for its characteristic properties, using the body as a tenant does his house or as a sailor does his ship or as a mechanic does the tools of his trade, there is a presumption that it does not perish with the body. Does the house-tenant of course perish when, from any cause, the house is no longer habitable? Does the sailor of course disappear from the seas when his vessel is no longer seaworthy, or the farmer from the fields when his ploughs and hoes are worn out? And the strong presumption is that the soul too will live on after its dwelling or tool has become unfit for its use. There is nothing in death, as known to us, that needs to harm any spiritual faculty. Of course, God, the Maker of the soul, could, if he should choose, make its end to synchronize with that of the body; but there is no evidence that he has so chosen, but, on the contrary, evidence that he has not.

The present life is too brief to match the plans, the powers, and the wishes of at least a large part of mankind. At the close of life they are conscious of faculties for which as yet they have had no adequate field and opportunity. They have laid out broad plans, it may be, of noble service to their fellow-men and are called to die before they have had time to carry out their plans. They crave continued life. They enjoy living and working and accomplishing, and they look with vast disfavor on the idea of stepping down and out into black and everlasting nothingness. By a law of nature as clear, original, and imperative as that by which the planets cling to the sun and refuse the cold and black vacuity of mid-space, their whole nature revolts from the blasphemy of non-existence. This even in infirmest old age. But many valuable lives are broken off much earlier. Perhaps they have just finished a long and expensive career of education. Their powers are only just beginning to fledge. They have only given one stroke on the arena of achievement. Their plans are large, their hopes are strong, and the great forces within them champ and foam like blooded steeds under curb, waiting for permission to spring away to the goal. But the permission never comes. The young minister hardly does more than preach his first sermon.

The young lawyer hardly does more than make his first plea. The young scientist hardly does more than make first knocks at the door of the unknown. Then the summons to leave all comes, and he is laid away in the grave amid the tears and disappointments of perhaps thousands. Alas for the Spencers and Larneds! "*Ostendunt terris hunc tantum fata, neque ultra esse sinent.*" Worse than this. Little children in great numbers, with talents and opportunities apparently as good as the best, are cut down at the first shooting of their tender blades above ground, are nipped by the death frost in the first budding of their fruit, are quenched in the first dawning of their day. What do their lives here amount to? What disproportion between such mere hints and suggestions of life and the majestic spiritual energies that lie coiled up in some of them! Some of them, if spared, could have sung as well as Homer. Others could have reigned over assemblies with their sceptred voices as did Demosthenes or Chalmers. Still others could have reigned still more widely across continents and ages with their sceptred pens. What a waste if death ends all! What a host of abortive and abandoned undertakings—incomplete, half finished, just begun—begun and then dropped for ever! Whole cities of houses in the first stages

of building, and lo, all work finally suspended; whole navies in the dock-yards with great keels fairly laid, and then left to rot! Who does such things? Here and there a fickle, foolish, or impoverished man, but certainly not the all-wise and all-mighty and steadfast God. He will fulfil all his promises, whether of word or deed. His deed in giving man so richly dowered a soul contains a promise of some worthy field and opportunity somewhere for all its powers.

Again, a future state is demanded by the *justice of God.* It is plain to the commonest sort of observation that men in this life are not always treated by divine Providence accurately according to their deserts. The best men sometimes have harder lots than the worst for a thousand miles around. Saints! Yes, but they are poor, sick, uncomely, despised, hated, persecuted, perhaps set up to burn as torches in Nero's gardens, while the monster himself, clad in purple, lording it over nations, looks down gleefully on the scene from a window of his palace. This is an extreme case, but past and present society are full of cases essentially similar. All know that the character of a man can never be inferred with any certainty from his general outward condition during his present life. He may live to the end full of honors and wealth and health and still be a bad

man. He may live to the end full of dishonors and want and sickness and still be a good man. The rags of Lazarus cover a man fit for Abraham's bosom. The purple of Dives covers a man fit only for hell. Such facts for a time stumbled David, as they have done many another man. It did not for the moment occur to the Psalmist how the divine justice could be sustained. His face grew black. But then there shot into his painful thought the idea of a future state. It was an apocalypse. "Ah! I see it now," he cried; "the future state will set matters all right. So foolish was I and ignorant; I was as a beast before thee!" David was right. Job, as against his three friends, was right. If there is a hereafter, there is still an opportunity for God to be just. What is to come may square accounts with the past, and the retributions of joy and sorrow after death may give all to see that God holds an even balance and renders to every man according to his work. Justice has only been delayed, never abandoned. The present is a time of forbearance and probation; in the next state men will reap as they have sown in this. But if there is no next state, if what our present eyes cover is the entire total of human existence and there is nothing for man beyond this current chaos of undecipherable providences, why, then, we must say, though it be

with a look and gesture of despair, "God is not the being that we thought him. His justice is not a mystery merely; it is a myth as well." Such are the hard words to which, with lashes and goads, the facts seem to compel us.

But we refuse the compulsion. We refuse to give up the idea of divine justice. Our natures revolt at the very idea of an Infinite Being who is not governed by principles of equity. Neither good nor bad men would know what to count on. Would God have given us a nature that recoils from himself? The very sentiment of justice which he has imbedded in our constitutions and to which he has given such lordly authority shows what principles he loves, patronizes, and acts under. The Being who has so made us that we have to condemn and flagellate ourselves for injustice, and sometimes to fall into a very passion of penitence, will not himself administer an unjust government. He could have made us intelligent beings, and so intelligent as to be able to perceive the difference between the fit and unfit, the useful and the harmful, the right and the wrong, and yet not have put a self-acting scourge in the hands of the soul to punish itself withal; for men do sometimes manage to get rid of this scourge, at least temporarily, and even of the faculty of moral judgment itself. Sometimes they totally

reverse the poles of morals—"calling evil good and good evil, putting darkness for light and light for darkness, putting bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter"—nay, they come to be unable to see that any radical distinction whatever exists between right and wrong, and actively and loudly deny the reality of such distinctions. The whole field of morals has become to them not merely a blur, but a blank, and a very black one at that.

What brutes do not possess, and man can suppress, does not belong essentially to an intelligent nature, not even to one of the human grade, and so could have been withheld from us by our Maker. The fact that he has not done it shows where he stands. And the fact that the throne of judgment which he has set up in every bosom does, until it has been overturned by long-continued and flagrant insurrection, chastise conscious unrighteousness so severely and reward conscious righteousness so superbly shows that his position is exceedingly pronounced—that he "makes for righteousness" with a feeling and determination with which no man can afford to trifle.

Against these considerations some would allege the absence of all communications to us from spirits after the death of their bodies. "We would naturally expect," say they, "that such spirits would wish to communicate with the

friends they have left, especially in times of distress and emergency. The fact that they do not, that their world is always 'as silent as the grave' to us, let what will happen, is proof that it does not exist."

Now it is by no means clear that a future world *is* always "as silent as the grave"—has never given any sort of token of itself to living men. Tokens of it have sometimes seemed to float out to meet dying men, just as strange plants and birds and sounds floated out to meet Columbus as he approached a new hemisphere. He was encouraged. Was not India hard by? The sailors with Paul deemed that they drew nigh to some country. Did they see it through the pitchy night? Could they bring any sense to bear directly upon it? Nay, but there was an indescribable something in the air, in the sounds that came to them, in the very pulsations of the waves, which, taken together, carried to them a vague impression of land just at hand. The impression was correct. Malta was just ahead in the darkness. So it seems to be with some persons as they approach death. "Coming events cast their shadows before." Subtile pulsations, aromas, temperatures, mites and filaments of characterization, seem to float out to them from the shores of another life just before them. Individually

these motes have no appreciable weight, perhaps do not admit of being specified; but collectively they foot up to much, to presumptious, to presentiments, to convictions—as atoms of air singly insignificant at last gather into a weight of fifteen pounds to the square inch. A *presentiment!* It is often as if men *saw* the future state. They cannot prove it to us, but they *feel* it. Is this disease or is it superstition? Are not we sometimes aware of the presence of persons and dangers which, from darkness or blindness, we cannot see? Does not the night traveller sometimes divine that he has a valley before him, though he sees nothing and would find it hard to tell how his knowledge comes? Do we tell him that either his body or mind is sick?

But let us for a moment consent to grant that the future state is for the present silent to us. No doubt it is so as a general fact. When our friends die we do not expect to consciously hear from them again while we are in the flesh. Is there any explanation of this fact consistent with the actual existence in full force of all human souls after bodily death? The Bible explanation is that all souls at death go to two other worlds—one class as closely-confined criminals, and the other as inhabitants of a distant heaven from which they may indeed occasionally return to us

on benevolent ministries, but which ministries in general must be performed in such ways as not to attract the notice of the bodily senses. God does not think it best that the future state and the present should be in sensible communication with each other. To walk by faith and not by sight is the need of living men. Are we prepared to contradict this? We do not know enough to do it. We can even see some reasons for thinking it might be very undesirable to run together and mix up on the same territory two worlds of such very different conditions. Other reasons may exist. Certainly we who find so much occasion for veils and curtains and partitions and dead walls that exclude both sight and sound, so much useful occasion for quarantines and segregations and *ne plus ultras*, and who are so ready to allow that it is well in general that the day and other circumstances of our death should be hidden from us—certainly such persons should not think themselves qualified to affirm that no good reason can exist for shutting off a world of spirits from all sensible dealings with a world of bodies, a world of probation from a world of retribution.

III. *As to the immortality of the soul.*

But granting that the soul continues to exist after the death of the body, how long does it continue? The traditions, creeds, and current beliefs

of mankind say that it continues for ever. Does any one of our many forms of science say a word against this? On the contrary, is it not forcibly spoken for by that principle, already illustrated, that underlies so many of our natural sciences, viz., the principle that every generic need has somewhere over against it an adequate supply, that what is needed to meet and satisfy and make available a natural trait in great classes of objects always exists or is obtainable?

We are able to do what the brutes apparently cannot—to conceive of an immortal life. Not only have some preëminent scholars uncovered and measured vast stretches of duration that lay hid in the astronomical heavens, but the rank and file of the race have, to a man, taken in a still grander idea—that of the everlasting, of always living. The idea has its metaphysical difficulties, but the word *eternity* stands for a real something whose permanent existence all men know with intuitive certainty.

And the permanent life which they can conceive of they strongly desire for themselves. Dread of extinction; a craving for an endless life, provided it be not miserable; especially a craving for an endless life that ever improves in beauty, dignity, and enjoyment, belongs to human nature. It is constitutional, universal, ineradicable.

The man does not live who would not leap with passionate energy to meet the gift of such a life as that, away from the black gulf of everlasting nothingness. One can, with a plenty of time and pains, pull up by the roots some forms of natural affection, but not this. It is thoroughly invincible. We had rather be extinguished than suffer without end, but not rather than enjoy without end.

We not only find in human nature a power to conceive of an immortal life, and an unextinguishable thirst for such a life under favorable conditions, but also a capacity to *use* such a life to a vast extent. We are conscious of power to use it for endless improvement in knowledge, virtue, usefulness, and happiness. The horizon of our knowledge, as well as our faculty of knowing, may be ever widening, the intensity of our virtuous feeling and purpose may be ever deepening, the forms and measures of our usefulness may be ever multiplying, and so the roots of our happiness may be ever striking deeper and spreading farther and laying hold on new sources of nourishment. Such a nature is largely wasted unless there is an immortality for it. What is the use of our having the wings of an eagle if we are to lead the life of a wren? Why should our Maker furnish us with the exchequer of a prince to meet

the expenses of a peasant—give his travellers an outfit large enough to carry them to a fixed star when they are only going a single mile from home? Able to conceive of a life without end, hungering and thirsting for such a life, and conscious of faculties that cannot be fully fruited and utilized in anything short of an immortality—why, the very laws of nature, as well as the divine character, warrant us in expecting an immortality. Even human workmen strive for congruity. They are not in the habit of making men of war to navigate creeks, nor a child's suit of clothes large enough for Goliath of Gath. Neither does God make human nature vastly larger than the sphere it was meant to fill. He does not endow us with capacities for which he provides no suitable field of action. This would be waste. This would be folly. Nay, would not this be wickedness? For, would it not be trifling with our happiness to give us a mighty longing and capacity for a good we are never to have; to raise within us, by the very greatness of our natures, delicious hopes which are never to be gratified? God forbid that we should think he would do what would be cruel in a man.

"Say, why was man so eminently raised
Amid the vast creation, why ordained
Through life and death to dart his piercing eye,

With thoughts beyond the limits of his frame,
But that the Omnipotent might send him forth,
In sight of mortal and immortal powers,
As on a *boundless* theatre, to run
The great career of justice, to exalt
His generous aim to all diviner deeds,
To hold his course unfaltering up the long ascent
Of *endless* life beneath the applauding smile
Of the Eternal Father?"

And many scientific facts conspire to show that what it would be cruel for God to do he has not done. Through all the round of nature there does not exist a class of beings, animate or inanimate, with a constitutional appetite and fitness for what cannot be had. There is nowhere a class of things whose needs do not, in the eye of science, bespeak the existence or attainableness of that which will meet the need. An anatomist in finding a bone practically finds the entire animal to which it belonged, also its environment when living. On what principle? On the observed principle that it is the habit of nature to put within reach of each great family belonging to her domain all the circumstances needed to utilize its powers. It may not be easy in all cases to lay hold of what is needed; individuals may suffer; but that an entire class of beings should have from age to age an unconquerable and unabated craving and fitness for what cannot be had is not only incredible to one who believes in a wise God,

but also to one who listens to the natural sciences. These tell us that God is not one to throw himself away; that he as well as man has his economies and gathers up "the fragments, that nothing be lost;" that even as trees capable of bearing ripe fruit do not always stop at buds or blossoms, so men capable of an endless career of ever-improving intellectual and moral fruitfulness do not always stop at such mere beginnings of things as our present life only allows. Our season here is too short to ripen us. Nothing short of the *Annus Mirabilis* of an immortality suffices for that. And this, therefore, is what we shall have.

We have seen that materialists, and all who say that death ends all, are in a wonderfully small minority. Nay, we have seen that all who, whatever they say, *live* as though death ends all, are condemned by the voice of mankind. According to that voice, this present life of ours is but an insignificant part of our whole life; merely a beginning of that which is wholly unmeasured and immeasurable; merely a mathematical point in the total outspread of infinite space. And yet, it is plain to see, many human lives are not in harmony with these views. Such lives are by no means fossils, dug up at great intervals from beneath the strata of long-departed ages, and won-

dered at in museums as specimens of a long extinct species. They swarm all over the present surface of the world. Open your eyes on society almost anywhere and you will find them. Perhaps you need not look farther than your own worldly and careless self, O reader, to find a large specimen—a large specimen of the many people who live as if the time now passing, with its eating and drinking, its money-getting and honor-getting, its business and pleasures, its frivolities and fashions, is their main chance, not to say their only one. Are you not of that tremendous majority who concede that there is an everlasting future before you? Then why live so? Why live self-condemned, and condemned from zenith to nadir and from east to west of all the religions and traditions and nations?

"Oh, what a patrimony this! a being
Of such inherent strength and majesty
Not worlds possessed can raise it, worlds destroyed
Not injure, which holds on its glorious course
When thine, O nature, ends."

# VIII. LIMITED PROBATION.

Δεῖ δὲ ἤδη ποτε αἰσθέσθαι ὅτι ὅρος ἐστί σοι περιγεγραμένος τοῦ χρόνου, ὦ, εὰν εἰς το μὴ ἀπαιθριώσαι χρήση, οἰχήσεται, καὶ οἰχήση, και αὔθις οὐκ ἥξεται. MARCUS AURELIUS.

Thou must at last perceive that a term of life is allotted to thee, which, if thou dost not use for clearing away the clouds from thy mind, it will go and thou wilt go, and it will not come again.

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Ὅτι θανόντων μὲν ἐνθάδ' αὐτίκ' ἀπάλαμ ενθι φρενες ποινὰς ἔτισαν. PINDAR.

That the guilty souls of those who die here at once suffer punishment.

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For we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done. ST. PAUL.

# VIII. LIMITED PROBATION.

THE Bible teaches that men are praiseworthy and blameworthy beings, and that, sooner or later, they are brought to account by God for their characters and conduct. From Genesis to Revelation this is the doctrine that underlies the Book. God is indignant at certain styles of behavior, denounces them, threatens them, chastises and punishes them. On the other hand, he loves and commends certain other ways of living, and encourages to them with promises and rewards. While his sceptre is recognized as in some way powerfully touching every event, the doctrine of necessity and fatalism, as applied to the human will, is everywhere quietly ignored or trampled on. "Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense unto Baal, and walk after other gods whom ye know not, and come and stand before me in this house which is called by my name, and say, We are delivered to do all these abominations?" "Who will render to every man according to his works—to them who do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish,

upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile; but glory, honor, and peace to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile. For there is no respect of persons with God." From him who handles the sceptre to him who handles the spade, from him who handles the Bible to him who handles merely the law that is written in his heart, "every man shall give account of himself to God."

So runs our Bible. And so, too, run all the bibles of the world, without exception. Whether Koran or Avesta or Veda or Tripitaka or The Kings or the Book of Mormon, it tells of certain things which men are *bound* to do, also of certain things which they are *bound* not to do, and gives notice of rewards and punishments in this life or another according as men treat the sacred teaching. These books differ greatly among themselves as to the things required or forbidden, but there is not among them all one that does not recognize abundantly the reality of moral distinctions—that some things are right and other things wrong, some things praiseworthy and other things blameworthy; and that men must expect to enjoy or suffer, sooner or later, according as they behave. The old Egyptian "Book of the Dead" summoned every man at death into the presence

of a divine judge to answer for his conduct in this world. The Koran says that a strict "judgment-day at the end of the world awaits all men; every action and word and thought will be weighed and get its due." The Avesta also says that "there will be at the end of the world a general resurrection and judgment, and that a just retribution will be rendered to men according to their works; that the angel of darkness, with his followers, will be consigned to a place of everlasting darkness and punishment, and the angel of light, with his followers, introduced into a state of everlasting light and happiness." And the Parsee of to-day, following the ancient Zoroastrian faith, says, "I am wholly without doubt in the coming of the resurrection, in the stepping over the bridge Chinvat, in an invariable recompense of good deeds and their reward and of bad deeds and their punishment." As to Brahminism, "its sacred writings represent the whole universe as an august theatre for the probationary exertions of beings who are supposed to be so many spirits degraded from high places and condemned to ascend through various gradations of toil and suffering to that exalted sphere of perfection and happiness which they enjoyed before their defection." The Buddhist Bedágat and Tripitaka declare that "the condition of creatures on earth is regulated by works of

merit and demerit. The lowest state of existence is in hell; the next is that in the form of brutes; both these are states of punishment. The next ascent is to that of man, which is probationary. The next includes many degrees of honor and happiness up to demigods and gods, which are states of reward for works of merit. Merit consists in avoiding sins and performing virtues, and the degree of it is the sole hope of the Buddhist." "The Kings" of Confucius tells us that "Deity is of such boundless goodness and justice that he can let no virtue go unrewarded or vice unpunished." As to those poems, oracles, traditions, and priestly teachings which among the Greeks, Romans, Assyrians, and others, have taken the place of sacred books, they all tell of Elysian Fields in the next life for the good men of this, and a Tartarus of penalty for the bad, as well as of current divine rewards and penalties. Park, after his extensive travels in the interior of Africa, wrote, "I have conversed with all ranks and conditions on the subject of their faith, and can pronounce, without the smallest shade of doubt, that the belief of one God and of a future state of rewards and punishments is entire and universal among them."

It sometimes happens that the sacred books and traditions of a nation do not harmonize with its actual conduct and practical convictions. The

people and their canon have somehow drifted apart. The lips say one thing and the hands do another. The old words are still bowed down to, but the old meanings have fallen out of them. Strange liberties of interpretation are taken; theories of inspiration, elastic enough to accommodate the wishes and whims of everybody, are adopted. Too often the bulk of what is called a Christian nation neither think nor act like Christians. The flag aloft has a cross on it, but pirates sail beneath. The uniform is all right, but the soldier within is all wrong. Conduct is very apt to belie theory. Even profound convictions go one way, the heart and life another. One may believe in temperance with all his might and still be a drunkard and a glutton; may argue for theism sincerely and powerfully and yet live as if there were no God; may admire Abdiel and yet act like Satan; may stoutly deny the existence of matter and yet flinch from a sword or a cannon ball as quickly as other people. So the nations, it is conceivable, might accept the doctrine of their sacred books as to human responsibility and yet their actual practice proceed on a different principle.

But, as a matter of fact, it does not. It always proceeds on the principle that men may justly be held to account for their conduct. If

actions ever speak louder than words, they do just here. Parents so speak in their treatment of their children. Teachers so speak in their treatment of their pupils. Public opinion so speaks when it smiles on the conduct of one man and frowns on that of another. The laws, judges, prisons, penalties of many sorts of which no land beneath the sun has ever had lack, all say with tremendous vocal unity not merely that man *may be* justly rewarded and punished, but that he *will* be and *must* be. The well-being of society demands it. Its very existence is staked upon it. So, from prince to peasant and from philosopher to child, every one treats his neighbor as praiseworthy or blameworthy, and in one way or another, in one degree or another, rewards or punishes him for his conduct. But who shall bring the sceptre-bearers themselves to account? Who shall retribute both autocrats and democrats for *hidden* things; nay, for a whole world of moral thought and feeling which human eyes cannot reach, but where lie the seeds and roots and fountains and essence of all outward virtues and vices, and where is the most hopeful field for the workings of a sense of responsibility? All nations have an answer ready. They all bid us look to another life where are set thrones of judgment higher than Kaiser's or Czar's. Whether supposed to be located in the

bowels of the earth or in the regions of the air; whether sculptured on the tombs of old Egypt or on the still more enduring classics of Greece and Rome, or, as the doctrine of metempsychosis, on the creeds of Eastern Asia; whether occupied by Minos, or by Osiris with his forty-two adjutants, or by cuneiform Belus, or by good Ormuzd, or by triple Brahm, or by Fate blindly equivalent to deity, or by Mohammedan Allah, or by Hebrew Yahveh, or by the Christian Son of God—these thrones mean a judgment-day for the whole world, in which all men shall find themselves conditioned for the next life according to conduct in this.

In no case have we yet found, in all our observation, any person who is not consciously in the habit of praising and blaming himself as well as other people; who does not feel driven to do so by the sentiment of justice, by the laws of his being, and by the very constitution and needs of society. Evidently it has always been so, for we not only find all the earliest books full of direct and indirect acknowledgments of guilt, but we find such acknowledgments freely sculptured on the earliest Egyptian monuments and on the Assyrian slabs in the British Museum with their penitential psalms and hymns in primitive cuneiform. Thus,

"O my Lord! my sins are many, my trespasses are great,
And the wrath of the gods has plagued me with disease.
O Lord, do not abandon thy servant;
The sins he has done turn thou to righteousness!"

Nor have we ever found a person who did not, sooner or later, in one way or another, after one measure or another, *treat* the people who come within the range of his dealing according to his view of their deserts. Especially we have never yet met a person holding to those about him a relation of superiority and independence, and so free to act himself out, who did not hold them to account, rewarding them with more or less tokens of his approbation or punishing them with more or less tokens of his displeasure—all in proportion to the degree of his superiority and right to control their conduct. If he is a father, especially if he is a wise one, he treats his children somewhat according as they behave, visiting transgressions with the rod or its equivalent and marking his approbation of good conduct by suitable favors. If he is a teacher, he makes a visible discrimination, and feels that he must do so, between those scholars who are diligent and orderly and those of the opposite stamp; turning looks of pleasure on the one class and of displeasure on the other, speaking words of commendation and honor for the one class and of reproof and dishonor for the

other, giving rewards of merit to the one class and meting out deprivations and painful experiences of various kinds to the other. If he is an employer, his workmen will, in time, be sure to find out from his way of treating them whether he is satisfied or dissatisfied with them. Some will get commended, trusted more and more, advanced to higher wages and higher duties, while others will get hard words, harder looks, and, perhaps hardest of all, a final discharge without recommendation. If he is a civil ruler, say an absolute monarch, he will have to find out ways of making himself feared by law-breakers and loved by law-keepers or he will soon cease to be a monarch. He must have arrests, trials, convictions, imprisonments, and perhaps hangings on the one hand, and, on the other, protections, immunities, encouragements, rewards, emoluments, offices, honors, decorations for good citizens. In short, wherever we find a superior, especially one of great independence, there we find the inferiors belonging to his sphere held by him to some account for their conduct. He has, under milder names perhaps, real penalties and rewards to signify his pleasure and displeasure, to encourage and discourage, to secure the things he wants and to prevent the things he does not want.

Now God is such a superior. He is father,

teacher, employer, monarch, all in one. He is above all, beyond calculation above all—so far above us as to be totally independent of us; free to act himself out towards all points of the compass without incurring damage or danger from any quarter. We fall within his sphere, his range, his beat; as all men confess in the worship they pay to the supreme God, in the prayer they address to him, in the message they think to have come from him. We are his wards, his children, his scholars, his employés, his subjects. He has his preferences as to our conduct, has informed us of them, will naturally take appropriate means to secure conformity to them. What are such means if not some form of reward or penalty? Is God the supreme, of all the superiors whom we happen to know the only one who does not hold his subordinates to account? Why should we think him a solitary exception? When we have found a throne of judgment set up in every other chiefdom (a throne ever enlarging as the chiefdoms enlarge), from the pettiest to the mightiest, shall we venture to say that it is scientific and reasonable to allow no force to the induction, and expect to find no great white throne whatever in that mightiest chiefdom of all in which presides the King eternal, immortal, invisible? It is not credible. We ought rather to expect to find there a

throne of judgment whose awards are as much ampler for both merit and demerit as the empire of God is ampler than the petty chiefdoms of this world. For so runs the analogy. The greater the sovereignty the greater its system of penalties and rewards.

Not only do all nations consent to the reality of moral distinctions, to the actual vast guilt of the race, and to retribution for moral conduct, sooner or later, by a divine Power; but they also agree that, in respect to retributions, the present life is a probation for the next—that our state immediately succeeding death is determined for good or ill by our conduct in the present life. The Oriental nations, believing in the transmigration of souls, have immemorially held that one's position in each of his many lives is determined by his behavior in the life immediately preceding. They have even held that his behavior here, through heredity and other causes, may determine his condition for weal or woe through many lives and ages. But all the other large peoples best known to us, especially the more advanced of them, have regarded the present life not only as a probation for the next, but as a probation for an *endless* next. Thus sings an old Assyrian cylinder, as deciphered in Sayce's "Records of the Past:"

"After the life of these days
In the feasts of the silver mountain,
The abode of blessedness,
And in the light of the happy fields,
May he dwell a life eternal, holy,
In the presence of the gods!"

In no case is anything said about an end to the state next after death, nor about an end to the rewards and punishments that introduce it. They are never spoken of as temporary; they are often spoken of as everlasting. We never hear of reprieves for the bad nor of reverses for the good, but we are often assured that we have passed into the realm of perpetual congelation. The eschatology everywhere contemplates permanency. The whole great future spreads out before us as a boundless petrifaction. Especially pronounced were these views among the ancient Greeks and Romans. Whether from the bright fields of Elysium or from the gloomy shades of Tartarus, no transfers were ever supposed to be made. As the life of retribution begins, so it continues evermore. Both destiny and character are fixed. Sisyphus rolls his stone eternally. Dido preserves the "eternal wound under her breast." To the best part of the ancient world the future state seemed like the head of Medusa; all persons coming into its presence are turned into stone.

Like views on this subject have been drawn

from their sacred books by Mohammedans and Christians. Rightly or wrongly, these have supposed themselves taught of God that unless a man does certain things in this life he will be undone for ever. Creeds differ as to *what* these destructive things are. The Jews have their ideas. The Moslems say that at least idolatry and unbelief are fatal. Indeed, the crowded millions of the remoter East (according to Sir Monier Williams, Professor of Sanscrit in the University of Oxford and one of the highest authorities in Oriental matters) all say through their sacred books, "Multiply your prayers, your penances, your pilgrimages, your ceremonies, your external rites of all kinds, for nothing else can save you from eternal ruin." As to Christians, by overwhelming majorities they declare that final ruin will overtake all who do not repent of their sins in this life. All the great churches, all the great denominations and confessions, have one voice in the matter; and this voice is but an echo of that which has been resounding through all the Christian history. All the fathers, except two or three in the Alexandrian school, held that probation for all men permanently closes with this life. So did the Waldenses. With scarcely an exception so did Christians of every name down through the Middle Ages. Dante expressed the practi-

cally universal sentiment of his own and preceding times when he wrote over the infernal gate, "Leave all hope behind, ye who enter here."

"The modern church has accepted the traditional faith on this subject. In proportion as the inspiration and infallibility of revelation have been conceded, the doctrine of an absolute, and therefore endless, punishment of sin has maintained itself, it being impossible to eliminate the tenet from the Christian Scriptures except by a mutilation of the canon or a violently capricious exegesis. The denial of the eternity of future punishment in modern times has consequently been a characteristic of parties and individuals who have rejected, either partially or entirely, the dogma of infallible inspiration."

All broad and impetuous Amazons are naturally supposed to have abundant sources in high places. We could almost be sure that the mighty faith that comes down upon us with such volume and force from the first Christian ages must be very clearly and abundantly taught in the Bible. And so it is, so clearly and abundantly that we wonder that there should be any persons whatever, professing faith in the Bible, to claim that our probation extends beyond the present life. A judgment at the end of the world "according to the deeds done in the body," the wicked going

away into a punishment as everlasting as the rewards of the righteous—such pictures backed by such parables as that of Lazarus and the rich man, with its impassable gulf, and supported on either hand by an army of warnings to seek the Lord while he may be found, all thrown without qualification in the midst of Jews and Gentiles immemorially holding that our endless future is decided by our present life, admit of but one interpretation. The primitive Christian teachers must have known perfectly well that they would be understood as indorsing the current belief, and must have meant to be so understood. They meant to say that mankind in every age had been right in thinking that their only opportunity for securing a happy immortality lies within the bounds of the present life. So they have always been understood to mean by the great body of interpreters. Men who believe in an infallible Scripture will have to say that just as the wintry breath of the Arctic circle stings instantaneously into marble all tears, whether of sorrow or joy, so all the joyful and sorrowful retributions of the next state at once congeal into permanency as soon as they feel on them the icy breath of the Everlasting.

We do not suppose that this doctrine was originally built up in any part of the world on grounds of mere reason. Nor do we think that it can

now be fully sustained on such grounds. It came by revelation, and by revelation it stands. At the same time there are not a few considerations that agree in preparing the way for it. They face it, they point towards it, they conduct in that direction, they ask, *Why* not? Does one say that it is not pleasant to think that our immortality may be ruined by our misconduct for a few years? Certainly not; but then, on the other hand, it is pleasant to think that our immortality may be saved by a right course for only a few years. "Keep up heart, O struggling good man! It is but a short struggle, and then all peril will be over for ever. *Canst thou not watch with me one hour?*" But, were the doctrine all unpleasantness, what has that to do with its credibility? Are unpleasant things never true? Are bad tidings always false? Death is actual. Sin is actual. So are many other terrible disasters, private and public, from that which desolates an individual to that which desolates a world. Does it seem to you that God could not consistently with righteousness, much more with benevolence, condition our whole wealthy future on our conduct during so brief a life as this? To this we answer: What if he should say that, much as he could desire to avoid the peril to men of such an order of things, he *cannot* do it? The nature of

things is such, and the exigencies of an infinite administration are such, that he cannot wisely do without such beings as men, or omit to give them such a momentous probation. He would gladly insure the endless goodness and felicity of all; for this purpose he has done and will do all that wisdom and power can do; but the situation is such that the final character and destiny of men *must* be decided by themselves and decided in the body. He will touch all possible springs, he will summon all possible influences, he will lay himself out to the utmost to bring about a favorable decision. He will move heaven and earth to do it. All the resources of a boundless compassion and wisdom shall be put in requisition; but, after all, it must remain with men to determine by their conduct here what their entire hereafter shall be. This is really what the Bible says. Is there a man beneath the canopy who knows enough to say that this does not give the real state of the case? It would require an infinite knowledge to say it, for we have to deal with an infinite scheme of things and one that is infinitely complicated—wheel within wheel in endless mazes.

And then notice what suggestions of the doctrine and, as it were, flights of steps towards it, in the almost innumerable probations about us. See the brief opportunities of advantage that never re-

turn. Within a few moments some Moses loses finally the opportunity of entering the promised land. Between two suns some Esau loses his birthright and finds no place for repentance though he seeks it carefully with tears. For three days some Nineveh can avoid destruction; after this nothing can prevent it. For a hundred and twenty years, while some ark is being prepared, the long-suffering of God waits on some sinful people; then the door is shut and the flood prevails.

So goes life throughout. When the poise of a pillar or of a person is disturbed there is a certain time during which the disturbance can be corrected; but after the leaning has gone on to a certain point it is sure to go on to prostration. For a short time you can pull up the young tree at pleasure; but let it get well rooted, and ever after it will defy all your tuggings. To-day you can make a valuable friend: the man is at hand, an influential introducer stands ready to do his part; but if you let the opportunity slip it never comes again. On a certain month if a man sows he will be likely to get a harvest; if he fails to sow then, he fails to reap ever. "If the disease had been taken in hand at the beginning it might have been cured, but now it is too late"—how often do we hear such talk as this in the case of a cancer

or consumption or fever! How long has he been under the water? If beyond a certain brief space, it is useless to attempt resuscitation. A few moments ago something might have been done, but now it is too late. Give over your efforts to make the cold lungs play. Make ready for the burial. In the turn of a tide, or of a hand even, many a man has improved, or lost for ever, the opportunity of making a fortune. We give you five minutes, not more, in which to catch the train, to reach a shelter from the storm, to escape from the burning house or sinking ship.

Such is life. Opportunities are perhaps seldom boomerangs. Many only just touch us and then disappear for ever. Some, like some comets, just flash once across our system and are never heard of again. We do not like this state of things, we would fain not be treated so cavalierly, we would be glad to have opportunities of all good sorts dance attendance on our convenience without limit; but we all know from abundant experience that they cannot be counted on to do it. They are not our bond-servants. They are fiercely independent. They insist on leaving us just when they please. They will ask no permission and will give no notice. In the twinkling of an eye they may vanish without the formality of leave-taking and never be seen again. Neither

their coming nor their going is by the nautical almanacs and observatories. Suddenly a great business opportunity flashed up to a man. Had he clutched it promptly he would have become fabulously wealthy. He hesitated. In a moment the yellow-winged angel darted away and never returned.

Youth is a probation for mature life. If early opportunities for education are neglected the whole life will suffer. If our ways of looking and speaking and walking, our ways of thinking and feeling and willing, are early formed amiss, we shall never fully recover from the mischief. Physical, mental, and moral habits strengthen day by day, root themselves more and more, go on towards invincibility and sometimes seem to reach it—who can say that the point towards which they always tend, and which they sometimes seem to reach, is never actually reached? When the Bible and all bibles proceed to tell us that opportunities of salvation are limited; that character settles to its final condition in the present life; that the process of consolidation and crystallization which we observe going on all about us in single traits goes on in our spiritual being as a whole till it reaches complete fixity at or before death; that even as childhood often decides the fortunes of youth, youth the fortunes of manhood, and man-

hood the fortunes of age, so our present life decides the fortunes of the endless next—we by no means find ourselves treading on ground wholly new. It is kindred with much that we have long been familiar with. The ground has been graded and terraced for us up to that on which the Bible stands.

In the face of this great consensus, and of the consenting hints and prophecies of it to be found in the existing order of the world, it seems plain what a prudent man would do. The only safe thing for him to do is to proceed to order his character and life on the assumption that he is now having his only opportunity to secure a glorious future after death. The Christian principles and ways of living are in general abundantly more reasonable and satisfactory than any other scheme of religion known to him; a practical acceptance of them will surely do him no harm and may do him incalculable good; while a failure to so accept them will, according to the general run of tradition and creed and popular belief the world over, involve the direst conceivable disasters. Under such circumstances there is but one course open to a reasonable man. Let him put himself without delay on the safe side. It is very safe to have a righteous character, very safe to live conscientiously and devoutly. It is very unsafe, awfully

unsafe, to live as though all mankind have been mistaken, as though there is no judgment-seat to be confronted when we come to die, as though we are sure of other opportunities beyond the grave for setting ourselves right with heaven, and all for the sake of living miserably a little while in wickedness and wilfulness.

We see that the heathen who neglect to live conscientiously according to the light of nature do it with the full understanding that they are thereby putting in jeopardy an immortality. Consequently they are very guilty. One cannot neglect what he considers to be the right way of living, and do it against an infinite motive, without great guilt. *Do* the heathen live according to the light they have? *Are* they in general trying to live as they think they ought? This question as to a matter of fact must be settled by the testimony of the men who knew them best, viz., the Christian missionaries who have lived among them for years. These testify a negative. They tell us that the heathen are not the innocents abroad that some would have us think. They not only know vastly better than they do, but the brunt of their character and living is in flagrant defiance of their own convictions. Paul correctly represents them in his Epistle to the Romans. They are profoundly depraved; they are deep

down in the mire of wilful sin; in short, they are religiously lost and need to have stretched down to them in their profound pit a mighty uplifting hand.

The heathen stand related to the law of nature very much as men do in Christian lands to the Christian law. If it is unjust to hold the one class everlastingly responsible for not living in this world conscientiously according to the light they have, why is it not unjust to hold the other class to a like responsibility for a like misbehavior? It would be hard to show, at least to the satisfaction of the average sinner, that the Bible stands out in a more clear and commanding light to him than does the law of nature to most on heathen ground; hard to show that the temptations to transgress are less in the one case than in the other. Multitudes in Christian lands are very unhappily circumstanced for leading religious lives. Heredity, training, example—in short, both nature and its environment—could hardly be worse. In our cities multitudes are born to as vast an ignorance of true religion as afflicts any heathen; nay, they are born and bred to such prejudices and hatreds against it as seldom trouble people outside of Christendom. There is no poverty more abject, no fight for daily bread more harassing, no misery of circumstances of any kind

more torturing, no temptations to all that is bad in opinions and conduct more numerous, various, and mighty than may be found any day fermenting amid a very large part of the crowded population of that *colluvies gentium* which we call New York. It is very much so with the East Ends, Water Streets, Faubourgs d'Antoine of most large cities in Christian lands in both hemispheres. They swarm with children so neglected by all good influences and so imbedded from their earliest years in the worst forms of wickedness and wretchedness that it would be hard to find on the planet, or even to conceive of, greater desperateness of unfavorable religious conditions. The Christianity that is only a few streets away sends no more rays into the dense gloom than if oceans rolled between; sends no more sweetness from her scented robes into the fetid air than if she were still dwelling among the stars.

In some respects the influences adverse to religion in Christian lands are plainly greater than in others. With us the gospel is an old story. On the other hand, a world of secular things of exceeding novelty and interest is ever pressing in at all the doors and windows of thought. The daily paper, that fetish which asks and gets the morning devotions of such multitudes, unloads at our breakfast-table news enough from all parts of

the world, on all sorts of subjects—from political and financial revolutions to the vilest domestic scandal—to keep us agog from morning to night. Fashion, society, the various ambitions of civilization, make great drafts on body and mind. The tides of business and pleasure and opinion swell and sweep about us with most distracting variety and vehemence. Vast are the rush and push and din and absorption of our hurrying lives. For to us this present world, as distinguished from the next, is a much fairer and grander thing than it is to an average heathen. Its prizes are larger, more various and numerous, and more within the common reach. So the competition for them is far more general and spirited. Innumerable painted barks on painted oceans are crowding all sail towards goals on the horizon that glitter and promise like rising suns. No such exciting regatta pictures the seas of heathendom and cries, "Up, and away to the chase, like everybody else!" Nowhere but here do such crowds of novel and engrossing secularities assail and capture the attention of men and lock it up in the present and material.

And then our intellectual temptations are peculiar. Universalism is in the air. So are materialism and atheism to a great extent. The infection is in the heights as well as in the depths.

Not a few men, bestarred with accomplishments and honors, are undertaking to deliver the world from superstition by delivering it from Deity and dogma. Nowhere out of Christendom is there the thousandth part so much or so influential denial of the supernatural. Science itself is overruled to make religion difficult. The grossest forms of radical unbelief and misbelief speciously argue and object and scoff on all sides. Meshes of ingenious sophistry, such as no pagan could weave, encounter every man that ventures abroad. In short, nowhere does mortal error dress so well or wear such fine and taking manners as within the pale of Christendom.

Here also sin as well as error gathers to itself all the splendor and attractions of the ripest civilization. Hooks are richly baited; not seldom are themselves of purest gold. Wealth, genius, and art are laid out profusely in embellishing bad courses. See how the gin-palace blazes out into the night, and gorgeous theatres summon placarded streets to sensualism by shows that have laid under tribute the utmost of the fine arts, and gambling bourses and "hells" shame the palaces of kings! The decorative art among us is not confined to such things as buildings, but works with great success to picture wickedness into righteousness as well as falsehood into truth.

Satan is no longer a cannibal, wearing horns and hoofs and spitting fire, but often behaves like a civilized being, and, at his best, is presentable in any company—the more's the pity and the danger! London and Paris furnish more temptations to wickedness than ever did the Fiji Islands; better know how to prepare opiates for uneasy consciences; can apologize for sin with more silvery voices and ape better the accent of truth as they say to the sinner, "Thou shalt not surely die."

But one needs not to go to our great cities, to their crowded attics and cellars, to their pits and dens of ignorance and degradation and shame, to their evil-haunted streets and "omnipotent" temptations, to see at what moral disadvantage millions of our people are born and live. He only needs to look at current literature—from the vicious trash that tempts our boys and girls up through the mass of morbid fiction that besets our young men and women, to that most fictitious and elaborate and dangerous trash of all that so often in these days assails riper and more thoughtful people under the prodigious misnomers of learning and philosophy and science—to find ample ground for saying that Christian lands have their peculiar elements of religious difficulty and danger and for doubting whether these disadvantages in multitudes of cases are not fully as weighty as

any in heathen lands. The heathen have no science, falsely so called, to contend against. The doctrine of evolution does not trouble them. They have no Mills nor Huxley nor Spencer nor Tyndall, no Paine nor Colenso nor Ingersoll. The very foundations of all religious belief are not so cunningly attacked in them—are not attacked at all. It is only in highly civilized countries that we find elaborate attempts to suppress or obscure the very primary conceptions of faith and duty. Dahomey never produced an agnostic. China never denied human responsibility. Theoretical communists, socialists, anarchists, nihilists, these are the fungi of a tropical civilization, the reprobate silver of a land rich in the precious metals. For laborious defences of all indefensible things go to the cultured perverts of Germany, France, England, and America.

So this is how the case stands. Though the moral disadvantages in a Christian land are to some extent not the same as elsewhere, they may be just as formidable. They seem to be so in cases not a few. For aught that can be shown to the contrary, millions among us have quite as much to contend with in obeying the Christian law as the heathen have in obeying theirs. And as to the laws themselves, it would be hard to prove or to see that one has at all the advantage

of the other in respect to clearness and authority with its subjects. Specially hard would it be to prove it to a man who is judging his own case. Criminals are full of excuses and extenuations for themselves. Their own circumstances seem to them peculiarly trying. They are always ready at a moment's warning to file bills of exceptions in their own favor. If anybody is to have the benefit of reprieves, commutations, leniencies, *they* are the persons. If a heathen should have his probation continued beyond the present life, so should they. If Menes or Cecrops or Romulus or Wing Sing is at liberty to think his earthly probation insufficient, so are they. This is what they *will* think. And so, practically, the idea of a probation continued indefinitely beyond the present life, under more favorable conditions than the present, will get accepted for all. The idea has Universalism in its womb.

# IX. POSSIBLE SALVATION.

Πεφύκασί τε ἅπαντες καὶ ἰδίᾳ καὶ δημοσίᾳ ἁμαρτάνειν.

THUCYDIDES.

All, both individuals and communities, are by nature prone to sin.

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Πρὸς δ' ἐμᾷ ψυχᾷ θάρσος ἥσται
Θεοσεβῆ φῶτα κεδνὰ πράξειν.

EURIPIDES.

My heart is confident that a god-fearing man will fare well.

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Μετάνοία κολύσει τον τέλους ἀφανίζουσα τὸ εν τῇ αρχῇ ἀγνοηθέν.

DION. HALICAR.

Repentance causes the original wrong to disappear by preventing its consequences.

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Whoso confesseth and forsaketh his sins shall have mercy.

SOLOMON.

# IX. POSSIBLE SALVATION.

THE Bible has much to say of salvation. An apostle calls it "the common salvation." It is common not only in the sense of being designed for all men and offered to all, but in the sense of being *believed in*, as to main features, by mankind at large. For example, they believe that the best salvation for man means deliverance from both sin and its penalty; that such a salvation is greatly needed; that it can be secured; that the conditions of it are atonement and repentance; and that a divine system of means for securing it exists in the form of sacrifices, revelations, miracles, sacred days and places, and priesthoods. They also believe this salvation to have substantially the same historic setting.

According to the Bible, the whole human race has come from a single pair whose home was in Asia near the Euphrates. These first parents were not a chance or natural product, whether sudden or graduated from almost nothing through almost infinite ages, but were due solely and directly to divine agency. They were not brutes; neither were they savages, though not acquainted

with the arts and sciences and splendid furniture of our modern civilization. But they were as well equipped, physically and mentally, for working out these splendid things as the best modern specimen of a man would be were he to quit completely his hold on the past and to begin the world anew. Nay, better. Primeval man had angels for companions and God himself for instructor. His environment was tropical, fitted to bring promptly into bloom and fruit all his powers. His character was perfect and his surroundings matched his character. He dwelt in a paradise. It was a home fit for a creature made in the image of God, wanting nothing that could contribute to his happiness. And for a time his happiness was complete. The gold was without dross.

But one hapless day the golden character fell, and with it the golden happiness. Satan, the old serpent, enticed the saint to become a sinner. Then sank paradise. Then sank the golden age. Then sank human nature itself; sank so far that it became a lost nature, a moral wreck. New generations came, but the old wickedness remained and grew. It became awful. The heavens blackened with wrath. The night deepened into midnight. O Sun, where art thou? O Moon and stars, where are ye? Gone quite from the muttering sky. Now it thunders. Rain, rain,

rain. Springs bursting out under every man's foot. Brooks turning to rivers, rivers to seas, and seas to oceans. See yonder last peak and, standing on it, the last man. The water touches his feet, creeps up and up till his long hair lies along the wave. Now he flings his arms aloft and is gone. Lo, the Deluge has swallowed up everything, everything save a single vessel containing a single righteous family! Heaven has drowned the earth.

The single righteous family outrode the flood and went forth from its ark to repeople the wasted world. They grew into tribes, tribes grew into nations—alas, into wicked and lost nations. But God was placable. He could and would forgive sin, provided certain conditions were met. An expiation must be made. A victim must die in the sinner's stead. If then the sinner would confess and forsake his sin he should find mercy. To help him to this God gave him revelations, miracles, Sabbaths, sanctuaries, ministers of religion—to inform him of his duty, to persuade him to do it, to keep him from lapses and to recover him from them.

These Biblical accounts are well reflected in the popular faith all over the world. Sacred books and oral traditions are generally to the effect that the race is one in its original locality

and parentage; also that the first human condition was exceedingly high and happy. Who has not heard of the Golden Age with which the classical peoples prefaced every history—a time when the gods dwelt with men and men themselves were almost gods; when perpetual spring reigned, the lands flowed with milk and honey, all useful and beautiful things were produced spontaneously, weeds and thorns and diseases were unknown, man was simple and innocent and "in league with the stones of the field?" Other traditions, found fragmentally imbedded in the faith and literatures of almost all countries, piece themselves out easily into the main Biblical history, telling of early godlike men, of their fall, of a Deluge and ark-saved family, of a new seeding of the earth with mankind, of another general corruption, of divine counteractions by seers and revelations and miracles and priesthoods.

The great depravity of mankind at present is recognized in the customs and institutions of all lands. What means the immense array everywhere of laws and penalties, of magistrates and police, of armies and navies and arsenals, of courts and prisons and taxes? They are the safeguards that society has set up against human selfishness and wickedness. They are monuments of what the world thinks of its own moral condition.

They have the gift of tongues to say among all nations that men are so wicked that they can only be kept in order, kept on living terms with one another, kept from glaring mutual injustice, by severe measures. Human legislation is of two sorts—that which is itself wicked and that which is against wickedness. Many laws are unjust, oppressive, against the truth and general interests, for the few against the many. They are themselves the streams that flow from the wickedness of law-makers—from their greed, selfishness, and cruelty. But even a wicked ruler feels that he must defend society against the wickedness of other men—against the tiger, the vulture, the serpent, the swine, the brute that there is in them. Hence in every land a great body of legal provisions for securing exact justice between man and man. The extent of this legislation and the severity of it show how general and mighty is the world's sense of the depravity against which it contends; just as the great precautions taken in a menagerie against the breaking forth of wild beasts, or in Holland against the breaking in of the ocean, show what men think of the dangers of the situation.

So it has ever been. The literature and usages and laws and histories of all known countries and times have always proclaimed it the sense of

mankind that mankind is terribly wicked. I am not now asserting that it *is* terribly wicked. As to that judge for yourselves. But what is the judgment of the world at large on the matter no more admits of question than does the presence of night and death in the world.

Of course this general sense of great sinfulness carries with it a sense of condemnation and danger. The condemnable abuts hard on the condemned. One cannot well hold to the moral ruin of the race without grave, though it may be vague, apprehensions of the consequences—without something of that "fearful looking for of judgment" of which the Scriptures speak. This fear expresses itself all over the world in innumerable supplications, rituals, austerities, expiations, propitiatory offerings. Such things are a trembling before a judgment-seat. They are a language in themselves, and when translated into English they say, "We are afraid of the punishments we deserve. Let us try to escape them." This is the outcry of the old Vedic prayer: "Take from me my sin, like a fetter, O Varuna; take far away from me this terror, O Varuna; do not strike us, Varuna, with weapons which at thy will hurt the evil-doer. Let us not go where the light has vanished." This is also the outcry of the old Babylonian tablets:

"May my sins be forgiven, blotted out my transgressions,
The ban upon me be broken, the chain loosed;
May the seven winds bear my sighs away!
I will tear my wickedness asunder; may the bird bear it up to the sky;
May the fish bear away my vexation, the stream bear it off;
May the beast of the field take it from me, the swift waters of the stream wash me clean!"

But such efforts mean something more than a sense of danger and of need of salvation. They imply some degree of hope. They at least say, "Perhaps the retributive power is placable. Perhaps it is possible to ward off penalties." Nay, there is not a religion in the world, written or unwritten, which does not hold out some positive encouragement to an anxious sinner. They differ in the clearness and degree of the encouragement they offer. Some are vague and bilingual in some of the kind words they say; but not one of them locks up its adherents in the dungeons of despair and then flings the key away. The sun shines, it may be through mists or even dense clouds, but it shines nevertheless; it is by no means night, with an opaque globe between the eye and the luminary. So the nations bring offerings; so they recite prayers; so they afflict their bodies; so they slay victims at the altar, especially the latter. Altars red with blood have been in the foreground of all countries and times. While

Moses—who is at least as good authority as Sanchoniathon or Manetho or Berosus—makes them coeval with the race, all other historians and traditionists find them as far back as they find anything. When we first see the Druid in the sacred groves of Gaul and Britain, the Norse folk amid their primeval forests and snows, the Roman fathers rough-hewing the Eternal City, the Greeks fighting on the plain of Troy or sailing from Egypt with Cadmus and Cecrops, the Egyptians at work on their time-defying temples and pyramids, the Phœnicians and Assyrians trading and conquering from Sidon and Nineveh, the Hindoos composing the Rig-Veda—in short, wherever we see first things peering out at us from the mists of the past—there we see the victim dying as a sacrifice for sin. All ages trickle with atoning blood. The lintels and door-posts of all lands are stained with heaven-appealing crimson. That sinners could be saved from penal evils without an atonement of some kind seems never to have entered the thought of men at large. They have thought, not only that an atonement must be, but that it must be suffering in some form, and even a mortal suffering—have sometimes thought that man himself must be the victim.

If with a bloody atonement the sinner should couple a putting away of the offensive thing,

his best chances of pardon were supposed to be reached. Regret for the past, with an honest purpose of a new life, would be just and reasonable; this is what offending men would rely on to set them right with their fellows if the thing were at all possible; this is what they would be likely to exact from persons offending them: so they everywhere assume that such are the surest conditions of acceptance with heaven—of salvation.

As aids to salvation mankind at large have always held to a supernatural revelation, to miracles or divine interventions in human affairs, to a priesthood or class of men set apart to the care of religious matters; to special religious days and celebrations, as Sabbaths and sacraments and public worship; to places of special sanctity, as groves and eminences and temples and synagogues and churches.

Such are the views generally entertained in the world as to the nature of salvation, its main historic setting, the need of it, its conditions, and the means for realizing these conditions. They agree with the views derived from the Bible. And the Bible views agree with those derived from reason and the sciences.

The radiations of the science of language are towards one original speech; the radiations of history, ethnology, and philology are towards the

region of the Euphrates as being the site of the parent language and the cradle of the human race. This is conceded by the most eminent scholars in such matters. But a common speech and a common cradle mean a common parentage—though some do incredulously ask whether it is possible that all the widely differing varieties of men sprang from one stock. Could different climates, modes of living, and other like things have given us brethren so unlike one another as are the blackest Nubian and the whitest Caucasian? Yes, it is quite possible. Under the stress of such causes, to say nothing of the help given by an occasional *lusus naturæ* in which the child breaks away widely from the parental type, communities have been known to so change color and features in the course of a few generations as to remove all difficulty from the doctrine of a single original parentage. The books give abundant examples of such changes.

Now, the single original pair must have been a divine product; for natural development implies many centres of origin in the course of ages. It is infinitely improbable that innumerable lines of organic development streaming upward in all parts of the earth should have culminated in man in only a single instance during so many ages. But if God made the first human parents, it is rea-

sonable to suppose that he made them "very good;" made them perfect in their kind both as to body and soul; made them with no depraved biases of constitution, but, on the contrary, with all their moral tendencies in the right direction; in a word, started them on their career with all possible advantages for making it a success. This is what we would naturally expect from a good God. And, as we have seen, the great traditions say that the race actually began in heroes, demi-gods, and gods—that it was with man as we know it to have been with the other animal tribes that have come and gone through the geologic ages. These generally began in their best specimens. As Hugh Miller says, "In the procession of the generations the magnates walk first." It would be of a piece with the geologic story if the best men, physically and mentally and morally, headed the long procession of humanity. Also, the high character of the most ancient languages and monuments does not invite us to think of our first parents as apes or savages.

That their Maker gave these first-class men first-class surroundings follows from the fitness of things. Flowers fit naturally to sunshine and not to shadow. A rich jewel should not have a mean setting, nor a common stone of the highway be elaborately incased in the finest gold. Heaven is

not a fit place for a bad man, nor hell a fit place for a good one. So we naturally conceive of the first ancestors, primates of the race and fresh from the hands of God, as occupying, not a desert, but a garden, as inhabiting, not an uninviting region on which the eye cares not to linger, but one whose charms appeal to every sense. That such men, so happily circumstanced, should have been healthy and long-lived, not to say immortal, is easily believed. It is even believable that such were the original physical soundness and stamina that even sinful ways, though necessarily to the prejudice of health, might require some generations in which to make very apparent their destructive work. Strong walls will stand considerable battering without sensible damage. Strong constitutions do not yield easily to first attacks.

Are lapses from virtue and high position uncommon in human experience? Solomon has had many successors in falling. No doubt, also, he had many predecessors; and why may not the first man, with his free electing nature, have been among them? As a matter of fact, open to the observation of the dullest, man *is* at present a fallen being. This is not a mere plausible speculation. We need no revelation from the highest heaven to tell us of it. We have only to look about us. Depraved tendencies and free sinning

meet our eyes on every hand. They are recognized and provided against (alas, sometimes provided *for*) in the whole structure of society. And so it always has been, as far back as the eye can penetrate. Where did the evident fall of human nature occur? The Bible says that it was in the person of the first man. Know we aught to the contrary? Why not in the first generation as well as in any other? Surely the Bible account is not in discord with anything that we know.

Nor is its account of the *extent* of human sinfulness. We are plainly a ruined race. Man in his natural state deserves to be called a "lost" man. Some indeed descant vaguely on the innocence of childhood and the grandeur of human nature, so as to carry the impression that theology has slandered it, and that even public convicts and murderers are hardly more than unfortunates to whom tender-hearted ladies should send delicacies and flowers and notes of condolence. But such euphemists, such rose-colored and rose-giving people, are demonstrably Utopian. They smite common sense and daily experience, as well as blood-smeared and crime-haunted history, squarely in the face. What nonsense! An average daily experience roundly gives it the lie. Closet theories ending in benedictions, and doxologies on glorious human nature get hard knocks

just as soon as they go forth to mingle with the world in nurseries and traffics and politics, to say nothing of steerages and East Ends and liquor-saloons and penitentiaries. There are natural amiabilities. Useful impulses exist in all men. Above all, there are numbers of measurably reformed and upward-striving people. And yet the moral state of mankind at large is such that the boldest of us would tremble were restraints of all sorts (legal, social, moral) suddenly taken off from the people, all bonds and mortgages to good behavior cancelled, and every person turned loose on society to do whatever he might please, without fear of any sort of accountability. Ah, what a scene! One would like to transfer himself to another planet. The lesson that every man in practical life soon learns is that if he would act prudently he must assume the justice of the Bible views of the present state of human nature.

Who can say that it is at all unlikely that God would show his displeasure at the great lapse of man by smiting his body, shortening his life, and driving him out of his paradise into a thornful and disfigured world; or that, afterward, he would not from time to time find occasion to let loose his hand in special judgments on specially presumptuous and audacious offenders? Would it be unjust? Is it plain that it would be inexpedient?

Does the eternal fitness of things demand that a fallen race should have unfallen surroundings, or that a government should never make unmistakable and affrighting examples of ringleaders in rebellion?

Nevertheless it would not be surprising if the Maker should pity his lapsed and wretched creatures. As little would we wonder if, under the impulse of this pity, he should devise some way in which he could consistently offer to pardon them. What more likely than that this way would involve the regrets and amendments of repentance on the part of offenders as well as some atonement in their behalf? Atonements between men are always in order. If a man has done wrong he is not only bound to be sorry and to do so no more, but he is also bound to make such reparation as he can. If he himself can make none, but a friend freely offers to make one for him, may he not properly accept the offer? And may not the injured party accept it? This is done in many cases by civil governments. If the penalty for a given offence is a fine and the offender has no money of his own, a payment of the fine by a friend will be accepted as a full settlement. This is really a case of vicarious atonement, of substituted suffering. And it is an open question whether the principle of substituted suffering, voluntarily under-

taken, might not properly be used more extensively than it is. Plainly, if the case is such that the suffering of a voluntary substitute is fully equivalent, so far as all governmental purposes are concerned, to the penalty as borne by the actual offender, it would be allowable to accept the one instead of the other. Can any show that such an atonement as the Christian claims to be—the freely offered suffering of God manifest in the flesh—is not of this sort? It looks to hungry eyes as if it might be. It looks to multitudes of judicial minds as if it would answer just as well in the case of a penitent as would his personal enduring of the penalty—answer just as well for expressing the divine displeasure at sin and for upholding the majesty of law.

Also, one should not be surprised if he should find Deity providing some system of ways and means for securing the necessary penitence, and for ripening it into a permanently renovated character and life. Among such ways and means why might not divine messages and miracles and ministers serve a good purpose; why not Sabbaths and sanctuaries and sacraments?

The messages from God would show clearly what ought to be done and would supply motive to do it, would instruct, counsel, warn, encourage, after the wisest and most effective fashion.

Miracles, in addition to other advantages, would authenticate the messages. And, pray, how else could they be authenticated? If men are to be taught and persuaded and disciplined in religious matters, it would seem exceedingly useful to have an order of men specially devoted to this work, as farmers and lawyers and physicians are devoted to theirs. It is hard to imagine a means better fitted to promote religion in the world than a body of competent men giving chief and skilled attention to its promotion. With learning and eloquence and consecration, with mighty voices and mighty pens, backed by a mighty example, what might not the cause of righteousness hope from them?

But, in order that such a class of men may do their work to the best advantage, it seems desirable to have sacred days and sacred places, Sabbaths and sanctuaries, in which the people may come together away from their secularities and sit under the shaping influence of religious teachers. The experience of the world seems to show that without Sabbaths and sanctuaries religious teachers would be without their best opportunity, and that, without religious teachers to explain and enforce the written revelation with the magnetic force of living voices, it would fail to reach society in the most economical and effective manner.

So institutions of this sort, common in one

form or another to all religions, are by no means unlikely to have come from God. Nay, should he demand FAITH, as all religions agree that he does, after having furnished great evidences and offered any amount of spiritual aid to asking souls—that is, should he demand that fairness of mind and honesty of inquiry which if duly used would be sure to lead to faith, the demand would be anything but unreasonable, according to any standard of reasonableness which common sense and the world's business would not cry out against.

And, altogether, we have a consensus not only of all religions and nations, but of many other rational witnesses, as to the nature and need and conditions and means of salvation, also as to the main historic framework in which the salvation is set.

# X. MAIN ETHICS.

Ite ipsi in vestræ penetralia mentis et intus
Incisos apices, et scripta volumina mentis
Inspicite, et genitam vobiscum agnoscite legem.

ANON.

Go into the recesses of your own mind and inspect the characters written there, and, as it were, cut into the very substance, and recognize the law born with you.

Who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another.

ST. PAUL.

# X. MAIN ETHICS.

"THERE is," says Cicero, "a true law, conformed to reason and nature, diffused over all, invariable and eternal, which calls to the fulfilment of duty. This law requires no commentator to make it intelligible, nor is it different at Rome, at Athens, now and in the ages before and after; but in all ages and in all nations it is and has been and will be one and everlasting—one as that God, its great author and promulgator, who is the common Sovereign of all mankind, is himself one."

"Cast your eyes," says Rousseau, "over all the nations of the world and all the histories of nations. Amid so many inhuman and absurd superstitions, amid that prodigious diversity of manners and characters, you will find everywhere the same principles and distinctions of moral good and evil. The paganism of the ancient world produced, indeed, abominable gods who on earth would have been shunned or punished as monsters, and who offered as a picture of supreme happiness only crimes to commit and passions to satiate. But Vice, armed with this sacred author-

ity, descended in vain from the eternal abode; she found in the heart of man a moral instinct to repel her. The continence of Xenocrates was admired by those who celebrated the debaucheries of Jupiter. The chaste Lucretia adored the unchaste Venus. The most intrepid Roman sacrificed to Fear. He invoked the god who dethroned his father, and he died without a murmur by the hand of his own. The most contemptible divinities were served by the greatest men. The holy voice of nature, stronger than that of the gods, made itself heard and respected and obeyed on earth, and seemed to banish, as it were, to the confinement of heaven guilt and the guilty."

To-day we have a wider and far more exact outlook on both the ancient and the modern world than Cicero or even Rousseau had, and the result of such an outlook is partly expressed by a recent writer in the Transactions of the Philosophical Society of Great Britain. "All races of people look on murder, theft, impurity, and falsehood as sins and actions to be avoided."

Prior to any inquiry into the actual facts we should expect that such things (and several others besides) would be found universally condemned by the human conscience. Their badness seems a matter of intuition. They are self-proclaimed crimes. And then they are so plainly destructive

to society if fully allowed that one would think that the rudest intelligence might see it—see it without argument. The man who does not see it without argument would hardly see it with.

There never has been a community where some form of government has not existed. But government means restraint from some things—from the nature of the case means restraint, for at least the mass of the people, from such things as would, if freely practised, be inconsistent with the existence of society in any tolerable condition. Now it is easy to see (for anybody to see, even for a savage) that a collection of human beings among whom no respect whatever is paid to rights of property, to domestic ties, to truthfulness and promises and contracts, to what is just and equal between man and man, to compassion and helpfulness for the wretched, to even personal safety and life—I say it is easy for the rudest to see that such people could not long hold together. They would naturally fly apart as if by dynamite and all the centrifugals. Every man would be a porcupine, an Ishmaelite, a French Revolution to every other. So, all over the world, government has never failed to demand, at least from the masses, conformity to all the leading moralities as held by ourselves. Thus among the ancient Egyptians calumniators received the punishment due

to the crime with which they charged the innocent. Falsehood was punished with loss of the tongue, forgery with loss of the hands, adultery with flogging. Perjury and murder were punished with death.

Of course we have to confess that the lives of men in all lands are largely ungoverned by just rules of living. But this is not because these rules, at least the main ones, are generally unknown or unapproved. All the leading principles of morals, as taught in our Scriptures and accepted among us and largely incorporated in the laws of all Christian countries, will be found on actual inquiry to be theoretically accepted in all lands and times. They appear with different degrees of clearness in different places; they are more emphasized at some times than at others; some that are set in the front here occupy the background there; but go where we will among the nations and dates, we can, provided there is light enough to see anything, discover them all. As vital air can be found everywhere in the world, though thinner and impurer and more disturbed in some places than in others, so the main moral ideas as we hold them are neither local nor national, but terrestrial. They belong to all mankind. Shall we take the trouble to except here and there some exhausted receiver of a "philosopher" or a rep-

robate who has managed to rid himself of all sense of moral distinctions? The Bible does not do it when, after instancing atheism, idolatry, sodomy, fornication, covetousness, envy, malice, deceit, murder, slander, disobedience to parents, covenant-breaking, absence of natural affection, implacableness, unmercifulness, it proceeds to say of the Gentiles, "Who, knowing that they who commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them."

A Christian missionary in Japan, who for many years has had large intercourse with its people, tells us that he has never yet found among them one not substantially consenting to the Decalogue. Like testimony has been given in regard to peoples in the interior of Africa.

Says a Chinese scholar, "There is probably not a single moral precept in the Christian Scriptures which is not found for substance somewhere in the Chinese classics"—found imbedded in much rubbish, found disfigured and even contradicted often by its context, but still easily found. Says another, "No nation in the world (heathen) has displayed the same ability to see what was individually, socially, and politically right." It is well known that Confucius taught the Golden Rule, which is really the whole scheme of Christian morals in shorthand. Whoever knows that

he ought to do to others as he would that others should do to him, knows that ingratitude, injustice, impurity, selfishness, dishonoring of parents, lying, stealing, cruelty, oppression, slander, unprovoked hatred, and malice are wrong; for who wants any of these practised against himself or family? As against himself, he holds such things to be odious and wicked. So at the bottom of his heart he knows them to be odious and wicked as against others.

The Buddhists, numbering not far from a fourth of mankind, have a system of morals so like the Christian that some have maintained that one must have been taken directly from the other. There is scarcely a thing forbidden or a thing commanded in the Bible which is not also forbidden or commanded in the Tripitaka. The Buddhists even have their formal Decalogue—forbidding killing, theft, unchastity, lying, slander, swearing, vain conversation, covetousness, skepticism, the first four items of which are the same with the last four of the Mosaic. So far as mere ethics are concerned, Buddha Gautama deserves to be called the light of Asia, though in other grave respects and in his general influence he is little better than darkness. His stars struggle through banks of clouds, his gold is in close partnership with a plenty of dross.

As to the Indian religions other than Buddhism, among much that is unworthy and pernicious in their sacred books we find occasional statements or implications of all the main elements of common morality. In the Vedic hymns, the Laws of Manu, and the Institutes of Vishnu are taught forgiveness of injuries, truth-telling, reverence for parents and the aged, kindness to the wretched, generosity, humility, chastity. The Institutes forbid slander, robbery, dishonesty, giving false evidence, drinking spirituous liquors, advancing one's interests by false statements, adultery, atheism. The Laws of Manu condemn wrongful gains, return of evil for good, slander, intemperance, dealing in ardent spirits, false witness, unjust judgments and punishments, violations of pledges and trusts, conspiracies to raise prices to the injury of laborers, gambling. Barth's "Religions of India," with one eye shut on all that is bad and the other open on all that is good, says, "The religions of India have not only given birth to Buddhism and produced to their own credit a code of precepts which is not inferior to any other, but in the poetry which they have inspired there is at times a delicacy and bloom of moral sentiment which the Western world has never seen outside of Christianity. One of the men who have done most to promote an acquaint-

ance with the Hindoo religions, Sir John Muir, has collected a certain number of their maxims and thoughts in an exquisite anthology, which must have gained many friends to India. And yet what a gloomy side!" . . . Here the other eye has opened on the vast mass of absurdities, inconsistencies, and abominations in which the golden grains are imbedded, on the wide deserts in which the little oases of just ethics are found.

The Avesta of the Persians has, scattered through it, like testimonies to the common principles of morality, condensed in a certain place into the following prayer: "I repent of pride, covetousness, envy, sloth, repining against divine Providence, unbelief, false witness, prayerlessness, theft, unchastity; of these vices repent I with thoughts, words, and works."

Like testimonies have in late years been deciphered from the "Book of the Dead," the inscriptions on tombs, and the papyri of old Egypt. From these we learn that the early Egyptian ethics strongly resembled the Hebrew, and even the higher requirements of the Christian religion. "None of the Christian virtues," says M. Chabas, "is forgotten in the Egyptian code—piety, charity, gentleness, chastity, protection of the weak, benevolence, respect of property in its minutest details." The inscriptions on tombs represent

the dead as trying to justify themselves before their judge Osiris in the following manner: "Not a little child did I injure, not a widow did I oppress; there was no beggar in my days." "I have taken pleasure in speaking the truth; though great, I have acted as if I had been a little one." "I was bread to the hungry, water to the thirsty, clothes to the naked, a refuge to him that was in want; what I did to him the great God has done to me." "I have not blasphemed, I have not stolen, I have not been cruel, I have not stirred up trouble, I have not been idle, I have not been drunk, I have not slandered, I have not been envious." One papyrus, held to have been written long before Moses, inculcates the study of wisdom, the duty of honoring parents, of respecting property, of being charitable and peaceable and contented and humble and chaste and sober and truthful and just. In the same strain run other papyri.

Little is known of the views of the earlier Arabians; but, as the descendants of Abraham they may fairly be presumed to have held to the same elementary morals as the Hebrews. At the time when Mohammed appeared Jews and Christians and disciples of the Avesta made a large part of the population of Arabia. The remainder were worshippers of stars and images, but they

possessed and held as sacred the Old Testament Psalms, from which one can gather a very clear and extensive code of just morals. They had also the "Book of Seth," "full of moral discourses," which they held to be equally sacred with the Psalms. Then came the Koran, and gave law not only to Arabians, but to a large part of the human race. Did it revoke the original "Data of Ethics"? Turning to the index in Sale's Koran and looking for such words as "crimes," "punishments," "sins," "murder," "theft," "gaming," "contracts," "oaths," "fornication," "adultery," "forgiveness of injuries," "envy," "hypocrites," "slander," "bribery," "charity," "chastity," "parents," we find ourselves able to piece out a very large code of correct morals, one that follows closely in the steps of Christianity itself. It is true that we find also many inconsistencies and contradictions, much that goes to make, and actually does make, the excellent moral sentiments nugatory; but it is plain that amid the wide wastes of Moslem belief flower many just notions, indeed all the more fundamental ones, of how men should conduct themselves. We should expect as much from a book that acknowledges both Moses and Jesus.

The Greeks were taught by the Egyptians, and the Romans by the Greeks. We should

therefore expect to find substantially the same moral ideas prevailing among these three peoples. We do find them. One could gather a glorious anthology of maxims and precepts for the government of life, not only from the pages of such sages as Socrates and Plato and Epictetus and Cicero and Seneca and Marcus Aurelius Antoninus, but also from the whole range of classic authorship—from Homer and Herodotus downward through the list of poets and historians to the latest Roman times; men who doubtless better expressed, and did more to form, the average thought of the people than did all the speculations of the schools in Academy, Garden, Porch, and Tusculum. Much of the testimony is incidental and indirect. Neither poet nor historian nor biographer nor orator lectures on ethics. And yet through the Iliad, Odyssey, and Æneid; through the dramas of Æschylus, Euripides, and Sophocles; through the fables of Æsop, the Lives of Plutarch, and the histories of Herodotus and Thucydides and Xenophon and Livy and Sallust and Tacitus and Cæsar, are scattered commendations of almost every virtue and condemnations of almost every vice. Indeed, those old classics, speaking out of the tombs of dead languages, are more in harmony with common morals than were the leading deistical writings of the last century, and on the

whole more wholesome companions for the young than an unexpurgated Pope or Dryden or Shakespeare or Gœthe would be. Shame on these shameless children of Christian countries and unchristian morals!

It is not necessary for us to collect bits of direct moral teaching from the broad fields of Greek and Roman writings. The very fact that they depict and praise so many illustrious characters shows that the people at large, as well as the authors, must have had sound ideas as to what men should be and how they should behave. Such simplicity of living, such government of the passions, such fidelity to supposed duty, such utter truthfulness, such inflexible justice, such placableness and generosity and mercifulness, such self-sacrifice for the public good, such greatness of soul, such careful honesty in dealing with great public trusts, such blamelessness as fathers, husbands, sons, citizens, rulers, as Plutarch and others have described and held up to admiration, at least show that those old writers were not wanting themselves in just ideas of a noble manhood, and that they felt warranted in assuming the existence of similar ideas in the people for whom they wrote—show that the people at large had among them from time to time, in addition to their better sort of philosophers, the most impres-

sive and commanding of all moral teachers, viz., actual examples of the most shining sort of right-living men. To *conceive* of such men as Socrates and Phocion and Aristides, as the Catos and Scipios and Antonines, was itself a liberal education in ethics.

Hardly less was it to conceive of such moral monsters as sometimes appeared. How the classic pens smote their memories! How the people gazed with open-eyed horror and hatred on the Neros and Caligulas of their time, and knew them to be horrible and hateful! These wild beasts in human form, too, were great instructors in morals. The vices writ large are powerful teachers of virtue. Depravity enlarged to the size of a mountain can be seen from afar, and have all its ugly scars and sores counted. Men blessed with all the virtues scarcely speak out the Ten Commandments more loudly than do men cursed with all the vices.

But let us come more closely to particulars. What are the views of mankind at large as to the following items of character and conduct?

### I. AGNOSTICISM IN RELIGION.

Some persons here and there claim that man does not know, and even that from the nature of the case he *cannot* know, anything on religious

subjects, cannot know even in the way of a reasonable faith. But all the sacred books of the world assume and teach the contrary. The great masses of mankind in all known times have believed the contrary. For, as we have seen, they have always insisted that men believe in a Supreme Deity, in worshipping and serving him, in a future state for man, in his responsibility in that state for his conduct here, and so on. Not only so, but wherever they have found a man who seemed to have no religious faith whatever (a very rare case) they have counted him a fool, a madman, or a heinous sinner worthy perhaps of mob-violence or of the sword of the magistrate. They have had no patience with such nonsense. Outside of Christendom, Comte would have been a social outcast, if not a victim to popular indignation.

What views the Bible takes of fundamental ignorance in religious things it is not hard to discover. It nowhere allows that a man can innocently be without religious faith, especially as to such matters as have been mentioned. "Without faith it is impossible to please" the God of the Scriptures. He says that "the unbelieving shall have their part in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone." An influential faith in Christ and his teaching is the formal condition of salva-

tion from permanent ruin. A neutral attitude is hardly less offensive than a hostile one. Indeed, neutrality is counted as hostility. "He that is not with Me is against me." The *tabula rasa* has no favor in the courts of the Bible.

### II. INDIFFERENCE TO RELIGION.

When men say, as they often do, that they feel no interest in religious subjects, some of us wonder at them. We do more; we condemn them. It seems to us that such men are unjustifiable before the tribunal of common sense, as well as before every other tribunal that claims jurisdiction in such matters. That of the Bible, for example. To care little or nothing for such matters as God, the soul, responsibility, immortality, salvation, duty—for such questions as, Whence came I? Whither am I going? How can I best know and please the Supreme, get pardon, recover from an evil character, provide for an endless hereafter?—to feel no interest in such great questions and themes is grossly against both spirit and letter of New Testament and Old. How can reasonable beings be so unreasonable? Are they stones, stone dead? Or are they merely asleep? Awake, thou that sleepest! The Bible is throwing torches at you, if perchance you may be set on fire—such torches as these: "The knowledge of the Holy is

understanding." "If thou criest after knowledge and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver and searchest for her as for hidden treasures, then shalt thou find the knowledge of God." And some men have been kindled by such teachings. Nothing interests them so much as religious topics. They study them day and night. They are "zealously affected" towards them. "They do with their might" this thing which their hand finds to do. To know the main religious truths and to conform the character and life to them seems to be deserving of more outlay of feeling and effort than anything else whatever—than any secular learning, wealth, honor, pleasure. These are the children of the noble Bereans. But some of them have been called the Pilgrim Fathers.

But the Bible is not alone in condemning indifference to religion. If we define religion to be the great doctrines already considered, together with conduct to match, then all sacred books and practically all mankind do the same. For these doctrines are taught in all systems of religion, and not one of these systems tolerates indifference to itself, especially as to its main things. The Mohammedans have no patience with the man who cares little or nothing for the teachings of Mohammed, the Buddhists no patience with him

who cares nothing for the teachings of Buddha, the Brahminical religionists no patience with him who feels no interest in the teachings of their Vedas and Shasters. On the contrary, the man who is zealously interested in them, more zealously than in anything else, stands high above all others on the roll of honor. This is everywhere the theory, though sometimes sorely against the practice.

### III. HOSTILITY TO RELIGION.

If all the creeds and nations object to indifference to religion as represented by those great truths common to all of them, much more do they object to that active hostility which is sometimes displayed.

The fundamentals considered in foregoing chapters, and which we will call Doctrines of Humanity on account of their well-nigh universal acceptance, have two classes of enemies—the secret and the open. The secret enemy professes friendship, sometimes loudly. You can *hear* the lips of Judas when he kisses his Master. You can hear the "God be with you" of Joab as he quietly inserts his dagger under the fifth rib of Amasa. A traitor? Yes, that is the word, though he does not like it. But he likes still less the odium incurred by attacking openly the foundations of re-

ligion. So he works under cover. He insinuates difficulties, he hints disparagements, he weakens old defences in the name of candid though reluctant science, he demands a restatement of old truths, he rejects the strong old-time arguments that have been marching on for thousands of years, and whose "eyes are not yet dim nor natural force abated," in favor of another of his own that halts on both feet and is blind. This is the meanest and not the least dangerous enemy religion has to encounter.

Then there are the open enemies. Their bitterness or imprudence or, if you please, their honesty, defies concealment. They declare war by proclamation. They ridicule the doctrines of humanity. They denounce them. They assert and argue against them. They talk at street corners and stores, they give lectures, they write books, they capture newspapers and magazines and sometimes a college; they especially seek the ears and eyes of the young. Sometimes they affect the calm, judicial, philosophical tone, and sometimes they almost foam at the mouth and blaspheme. Some are graduates of colleges; more are graduates of factories, liquor-saloons, and anarchist clubs. Men of the Paine and Most sort stamp on the great religious doctrines that are common to all religions as they would on a serpent.

Such men, whether recognized as open or secret assailants, assailing as they do what is common and fundamental to all religions, would of course be frowned upon by all. From the nature of the case, the world at large would regard them as enemies of the human race as well as of heaven. More than this, in many, if not most, countries and times such people would not have been tolerated. They would have been boycotted. They would have incurred personal danger. They would have been mobbed or handed over to the civil power as nuisances that ought to be abated. Perhaps they would have been invited to drink the hemlock by some Committee of Public Safety. In some way they would have had focused upon them a blaze of public indignation.

### IV. PRACTICAL ATHEISM.

Men who do not attack religion in any way, who even profess to believe in it and to have considerable intellectual interest in its problems, often live in practical atheism. They do not worship any deity, nor consult his will, nor make him any offering, nor pray to him, nor visit his temple, nor do anything for his honor; they are not kept back from anything they like by the fear of him, nor persuaded to anything they do not like by a regard to his approbation. They are practi-

cal atheists. Their lives are wholly vacant of God. Whatever correct notions they may have about him are wholly uninfluential on their conduct. Their theory and practice are divorced parties. The two are not on speaking terms with each other. To all intents and purposes divinity is to them nonentity.

Set a man of this stamp, with all his godless ways fully open to view, in the midst of any heathen or Moslem population, what would they think of him? Very unfavorable things, of course; for his ways run counter to the whole current of their ideas, their usages, their traditions, and, if they have them, their sacred books. It would not much help his case with them for him to say with his lips that he believes in a God while his whole life besides is loudly discounting such a Being. They would be apt to think that the man has added hypocrisy to his other virtues; and they would look askance at him. They would persecute him with their thoughts if not with their hands. If free to act themselves out, they would soon make him feel something more than want of harmony with his surroundings. Perhaps it would be venturesome to insure his personal safety. Certainly it would *not* be venturesome to insure his having very uncomfortable neighbors.

But how would he fare in Christian lands? Better, no doubt, so far as outward treatment is concerned. We are getting used to such people, and we believe in religious liberty, so we do not persecute him. We disdain to proceed to such uncivilized extremities. And yet, as many as believe the Bible, with its strong words about those "who say and do not," hold his attitude to be utterly indefensible. Indeed, as many as believe in acting reasonably and self-consistently refuse to stand up for him. Nay, he does not stand up for himself. As a sensible man he cannot but allow that to build his life on the assumption that there is no God, while actually believing or even suspecting the contrary, is not the proper thing to be done. Though multitudes in Christendom act in this inconsistent way, not one of them would think of setting himself to justify it, though many might try to extenuate it.

### V. UNCONSCIENTIOUSNESS.

There are worse people than some practical atheists, for these may have some regard to what is right between man and man although completely ignoring God. I mean people who seem to have no consciences. As far as one can see, they are utterly regardless of all considerations of right and wrong. They are restrained from some

things by the laws of the land or by public opinion or by a regard to self-interest, but never by a regard to what is right. Undisguised men of this stamp are very rare; it costs too much in the way of social standing for a man to wear on his forehead in capitals, "UTTERLY UNSCRUPULOUS." So the utterly unscrupulous men commonly refuse to appear as such. But once in a while a man is found so shameless and reckless as not only to make no secret of the fact that he recognizes no moral obligation whatever, but even to glory in it. "Whatever else he may be, he is no hypocrite." He offers to argue with you and to prove from Hume and others that virtue and vice are mere names—mere superstitions and priestcraft. He has gradually come to this position by abusing his conscience. And now he is a reprobate, his movements no more influenced by a moral sense than are the waves of the sea.

How our Bible views such men—men "past feeling," whose consciences are "seared with a hot iron," whose very "mind and conscience are defiled," who in morals "neither fear God nor regard man," but have been "given over to strong delusion, to believe a lie"—lies on the surface; hardly more so, however, than do the views of all other so-called sacred books. Put a thoroughly unscrupulous man under the gaze of any of the

Gentile bibles, ancient or modern, and not one would approve him. They all recognize the reality of moral obligation, declare its paramount authority, take it for granted that few are so forsaken of Deity and common sense as to think a negative. They may mistake as to what is duty; but as to there *being* such a thing as duty, there is but one verdict among them; only the one verdict is in different languages. If any man, on hearing it spoken in Arabic or Sanscrit or Cingalese or Chinese, should begin to scoff, they would threaten him with the wrath of heaven and earth.

You could not place such a man, stripped of all disguises, anywhere out of Christendom without his being looked on as a monster—a monster and curiosity. Not that there is not a plenty of unconscientiousness about, but it is not, in general, of the stark, undecorated, downright kind. The bitter is sweetened somewhat; the ugly is painted somewhat; the deformed has called to its aid the great resources of dress. So the man does not know himself. But he knows that other man who has been brought out under the eye of the sun and peeled, coat after coat, till the core of him is reached, and found disavowing all moral principle—knows him to be a public danger. So the public pronounces him. Everywhere he would

be apt to get a treatment so uncomfortable as to make him think it best to retire under cover from the sharp-shooting into some pretence at least of not being wholly without principle—into at least some apparent respect to the universal *ought* and *ought not*. A community may for a time so lapse into the morbid and dreadful that it may be fashionable to pretend to be without scruples of any kind; but, from the necessity of the case, such a state of things cannot last. Paris will not be long in finding out that society itself does not last under such circumstances.

### VI. SELFISHNESS.

It is plain to the plainest understanding that if every man should pursue his own objects without any regard whatever to the interests of others, the result would be endless antagonisms, embroilments, and finally social disorganization. Accordingly there has never been a sacred book or government that has not forbidden its subjects to act under the law of unlimited selfishness. Every man must remember that he is one of many. In his eager pursuit of his own welfare he must be careful not to ride down other people. Even the steeple-chase, with the fox in full view, must respect my harvest-field. So governments undertake to stand at all crossings where the streams of

business and pleasure come together, and see to it that no man, in hot pursuit of his own bubble, tramples in the dust the persons and bubbles of other people. This is their business. They must at least pretend to be equitable, to do justice to all; which means that the selfish greed or ambition or pleasure-seeking of one man shall not be allowed to trench on the rights of others.

Did you ever see a wholly selfish man? Perhaps not. But you have seen a man who, in your view, would stop at nothing safe to himself in order to reach his object; who, if the comfort or the property or the health or the morals or even the life (not to say the soul) of his neighbor stood in the way, would not visibly hesitate to trample it down. He is bound to succeed at whatever cost. He goes straight to his mark, let what will suffer. Let all who are on his track look out for the engine. It will neither stop nor swerve nor ring a bell—the heartless thing. O rumseller, will you not stop for the tears and groans and hunger and rags and despair of the homes you are crushing? No. O director, will you not refuse to climb to fortune on the distresses and financial ruin of the small stockholders that lie under your feet? No. O soldier, can we not persuade you away from the throne which you can only reach by wading through deeps of blood? No.

Set such a man, unmasked and undecorated in any way, in full daylight among the rudest of people. What do they think of him? There is not a savage so rude as not to see that such selfishness is monstrous, that a plenty of it let loose on the world means endless injustice and misery. Only let everybody be like that man, and drive towards his own particular goal with the same recklessness of consequences to all others, what concussion and wrecks there would be! How much cultivation or goodness does it take to see that! As little does it take to see that the unselfish principle which takes loving account of all interests in proportion to their value, which refuses to sacrifice the public to the individual, is the child of reason, the mother of peace, the friend of the world, and kin of heaven.

But have you ever seen a wholly unselfish person? Certainly not. But I have seen many a man in whom the principle of unselfishness was *enthroned;* who looked with mighty aversion on the opposite principle and fought all tendency to it in himself with downright heartiness and scornfulness; who, instead of being willing to sacrifice others to himself, much preferred to sacrifice himself to others; to whom it was enough to condemn any undertaking to know that, in order to succeed in it, he must damage his neighbor one whit. To

be sure, his anxiety to do no harm made his path somewhat crooked. A straight line through a crowd means that somebody will be hurt. So he wound in and out, made all manner of detours, lest he should hurt this man's feelings or that man's property or the other man's conscience. Yes, somewhat crooked; but then there is such a thing as a blessed crookedness. The curve line is sometimes the line of beauty as well as of duty. So he felt; and so he would go farther and fare worse rather than follow any chase, however exciting, across his neighbor's wheat-field.

Place such a man by the side of the other in any age or nation, and the public would morally choose between them in a flash of lightning. The one would command universal approbation, the other universal condemnation. There is not a man between the poles who would not like to be himself treated on benevolent principles rather than on selfish, or who would fail to see the beauty and righteousness of such treatment. If given his choice as to whether he would have for neighbors men who would have a sacred regard to his welfare as well as to their own, and would never allow the latter to override the former, or men who would not hesitate to ride Bucephalus over him rough-shod for the sake of every petty convenience to themselves, they would not long

"halt between two opinions"—hardly longer than the Christian who has been taught to "look not only on his own things, but also on the things of others."

VII. VOLUNTARY HARMFULNESS OR USELESSNESS.

There are misanthropes. There are mischief-loving people who toss about "arrows, firebrands, and death" in sport. "The poison of asps is under their lips, their feet are swift to shed blood, destruction and misery are in their path, they cannot sleep unless they have caused some to fall." You may, if you please, call them nihilists, for they deserve the name. They delight in seeing the downfall of characters and properties and reputations, and will assist the ruin if need be. They circulate slanders. They set families by the ears. They corrupt the young and set them on those downward courses that end in perdition and the breaking of parents' hearts. In short, they encourage in the community everything that is bad and discourage everything that is good. The morals, the business, the reputation of their place are the worse for their living in it; so that the people are glad to have the nuisance abated, whether by emigration or by death. For "they are a smoke in the nose, a fire that burneth all the day."

Such a man does not need to be at the heart of Christian civilization in order to find general condemnation. Men everywhere, whether named after Mohammed or Confucius or Zoroaster or Christ, instinctively count him a criminal. He knows better than to live such a harmful life, and all observers know that he knows better. Their thoughts and eyes and lips accuse him. The turban condemns him in Turkey, the queue in China, and the eagle's feather in the wilds of Oregon. He is a Nero, a Robespierre—perhaps in a large sphere, perhaps in a small one. It makes no difference whether he curses a kingdom or a kennel. "One murder makes a villain, a thousand murders a hero," is only a grim sarcasm.

Said an eminent Scotch philosopher, "We can imagine vessels sent on voyages of benevolence, to diffuse over the world the blessings of a pure religion; we can imagine voyages of this kind to diffuse the improvements of our sciences and arts. But what should we think of a voyage of which the sole object was to teach the world that those who intentionally do good to society ought to be objects of greater regard than he whose life has been occupied in plans to injure it, or at least as many individuals of it as his power could reach? What shore is there at which such a vessel could arrive, however barren the soil and savage the

inhabitants, where this simple doctrine which it came to diffuse would be regarded as giving any instruction? The half-naked animal that has no hut in which to shelter himself, no provision beyond the precarious chase of the day, whose language of numeration does not extend beyond three or four, and who knows God only as something which produces thunder and the whirlwind—even this miserable creature would turn away from his civilized instructors with contempt, as if he had not heard anything of which he was not equally aware before. The vessel which carried out that simple primary essential truth of morals might return as it went. It could not make a single convert because there would not have been one who had any doubts to be removed."

Even if a man stops short of being a public nuisance and we can only say of him that he is a useless fellow, he gets universal disapproval. Try him. Plant him in any place, within Christendom or out of it, and let it be understood that he is one who, in the face of the woes and wants of his fellows, is pure zero and does not care to be otherwise; both the heads and hearts of all men will shake themselves against him. They will, as they look, instinctively feel that he is not what he ought to be. He is a dry stick. There is no sap nor use in him. He is not even serviceable as

ballast in the public ship. So the public feel, and even the men who are unconsciously like him feel the same. And they feel it all the more if the worthless fellow stands side by side with another man of the opposite character, a man whose whole life is a general benediction and meant to be such, who cumbers no ground, who buries no talent, who is all eye to see opportunities of being of service and all hands to use them. God bless him! "That is the sort of man for me," says everybody, whether he wants a neighbor, a servant, a son, a father, or a king.

In fact, the Bible and Christian morals, when they hurl their stones of condemnation at the man who "cannot sleep except he has caused some to fall," when they demand not merely that men be "harmless as doves," but that they "do good to all men as they have opportunity," only put their indorsement on the law written in the human heart everywhere. It is a very great indorsement—worth far more, and far more legibly and boldly written, than nature's signature; just as the name on the back of a note may be vastly fairer and weightier commercially than the name on its face. And yet it is a mere indorsement, with a mighty pen, of a law as old as humanity, and so written into its substance that neither time nor sin has been able to erase it.

### VIII. INGRATITUDE.

You have done him great favors, what he himself considers such. When he was hungry you fed him; naked, you clothed him; sick and in prison, you visited him. Bankruptcy stared him in the face: you indorsed for him. His good name was attacked: you stood up for it. His crops were suffering: neglecting your own, you came to the rescue. His life was in danger: you perilled your own life to pull him out of the water or the fire.

But the man is ungrateful. What he has received he coolly takes as his right. He never says, "Thank you," nor looks it nor feels it. Not a ripple of tenderness goes out to the man to whom he owes so much. Will he turn aside in the least from his path to do his benefactor a service? No. Will he give a penny for his need? No. Will he give a crust for his hunger? No. Will he speak a word for him when others are speaking against him? No. It almost brings tears to our eyes to think what, in your magnanimity of self-denial, you have done for him. But he—his heart is flint of the hardest sort. Could one break it with a sledge?

What does the world think of such an ingrate? I say the *world*, not that small part of it whose consciences have been instructed by the Christian

religion. Put him fairly before the natives of Dahomey and the savages would cry *shame* upon him. He knows that if he himself were treated in such a heartless manner, under like circumstances, he would feel wronged; would feel it a righteous thing if all his fetishes and gods should break out in judgment on the thankless wretch, especially if he should happen to see the man in sharp contrast with the opposite character. We need not go out of a Christian land to know how the worst heathen would feel; for a Christian land always contains more or less of the worst specimens of heathenism—men darkened with the worst possible error and imbruted with the worst possible vice. And never yet has the Bible-reader, as he has explored the slums of our cities, met with a man sunk so low as to stand up for the innocence of ingratitude, unless he denies the reality of moral distinctions altogether. Though perhaps a thankless wretch himself, he would try to hide under some cover. He dare not stand out uncovered to meet the scornful wrath of mankind.

### IX. RETURNING EVIL FOR GOOD.

A still stronger case than the last is that where a man returns hate for your love, malediction for your benediction, great harms for your great benefits. He is not content with the monstrousness

of ingratitude. He goes on to the greater monstrousness of returning evil for good. The class to which he belongs is thus described by David: "When they were sick my clothing was sackcloth. I humbled my soul with fasting, I behaved as though they had been my friends or brothers. But in my adversity they rejoiced and gathered themselves together against me." Perhaps he dislikes your character, which is such a striking contrast to his own. Perhaps he notices that this character of yours draws to you an honor and affection in the community which are not accorded to himself. So envy and jealousy begin to work; and now it is hate and now it is malice prepense, going out into acts of deliberate mischief. He lies in wait for his friend. He smites his good name. He appropriates or destroys his property. He misleads his children. Not a harm comes to the good man but he is glad, not a good but he is sorry. So he gives a "double and twisted" defiance to the Scripture that says, "See that none render evil for evil to any."

One need not be afraid to put such conduct as that before the most heathenish tribunal in Central Africa. He could be sure of a swift verdict of *Guilty*. No need to consume days and nights in weighing conflicting considerations; quick as a flash would come the stern and righteous judg-

ment. Quick as a flash all men would see the blackness of the man, as they see the blackness of midnight when the lightning leaps athwart it. Especially if they could have the help of lights and shadows, could see the evil set over against a shining specimen of the opposite good, viz., a man returning good for evil. Then the evil would stand out. Then beholders would say, How black it is! And they would feel that a world thoroughly benighted with that sort of night would not long find its way through the spaces.

### X. CRUELTY.

Nero was cruel. To amuse himself he burned Rome. To accommodate his arena with just the right sort of sand he made all ships from Egypt bring sand instead of grain to the starving city. To glut his greed, princes became beggars; to glut his sensuality, homes vanished like a wreath of smoke when the caves of Æolus are emptied; to glut his thirst for blood, poison and sword and cross and wild beasts filled every dwelling in Rome with a reign of terror. Multitudes of nameless men and women, sewed up in sacks and smeared with pitch, burned as torches in his gardens; or, wrapped in the skins of wild animals, were torn in pieces by dogs under his delighted eyes. With awful impartiality he rioted on the tears and

groans of plebeians and patricians, of pagans and Christians, of foreigners and Romans, of gladiators and brutes, of enemies and friends. Tremble, illustrious Fabii and Gracchi; tremble, teachers Burrhus and Seneca; tremble, wife Octavia and brother Britannicus and mother Agrippina, and holy apostle Paul—this time not one of you shall be "delivered out of the mouth of the lion." Ah, what a wild beast! All the deserts could not turn out his equal. "Would that Rome had but one neck; then I could cut it in two at a blow." "People may hate me, if they only fear me." With such words on his lips he did his best to pave his short way with the miseries of mankind.

To say that Nero was inhuman is merely to say that wanton cruelty has against itself the voice of humanity. Is there a sane man in any land or in any time who approves the Neronic way of doing, dares to praise it and to call it so much righteousness? Nay, is there one (reprobates and "philosophers" always excepted) who does not positively condemn it as wicked with the prompt uprising of his whole soul? If there is, he belongs to the museums. Some cases of cruelty and oppression are so perplexed by considerations of motive and circumstance that the verdict of the observer on them becomes hesitating; but, given a case of what he recognizes as

pure wanton cruelty, and everybody sends out his verdict of *Guilty* with a strong breath. Especially if his eye can take in at once Nero and Antoninus Pius; some Turkish pasha enriching himself in the speediest manner by remorselessly harrying his miserable province with bastinadoes, prisons, and confiscations, and the pitiful, helpful Jesus of Nazareth. Then the veriest savage, gazing on that worse savage in imperial purple, would say in his heart, "*O wretch!*" gazing on Jesus would say, "*O divine Man!*" And the verdict would be affirmed all over the world. Every one knows that he would deem it a wickedness were he himself writhing under the heel of that old Roman despot. And it is so easy to see that, were all men thoroughly cruel and oppressive, nobody kind and helpful and merciful to his fellow, the world would be intolerable and society impossible!

### XI. PROFANITY.

His mouth is habitually foul with oaths. He desecrates the sanctuaries of religion. He is at pains to pour contempt on sacred days and their belongings, on prayer and praise and sacraments and endeavors to promote a sense of religion in the community. Perhaps he holds mock prayer-meetings. Perhaps he ridicules the idea that

anything is sacred, and defies heaven and earth with extremities of blasphemy and sacrilege.

Of course our Bible declares against all irreverence towards religious things. The name of God must be hallowed, his sanctuaries reverenced, his day kept holy, his Word honored above all other books. Every form and degree of profaning treatment of such things is disallowed: the grosser forms and degrees are denounced as characterizing the last stages in wickedness of the man whose throat is an open sepulchre, whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness, who clothes himself with cursing as with a garment.

But the man to whom nothing is sacred gets no encouragement in his attitude from *any* of the religious traditions and bibles. Heathendom and Islam would, perhaps, tear him limb from limb—that man who desecrates mosques and temples, and spits on revelation and worship and Deity. Christendom tolerates him till he proceeds to actual violence and becomes a disturber of the public peace; but she sets a brand upon him, and, as much as possible in the complications of social and business life, passes him by on the other side, well to the windward. Practically, all mankind believe, and have always believed, in sacred things and in treating them with respect. The man who reverences nothing pleases nobody, outrages the

common sentiment of the race, insults the instincts and traditions of Jew and Gentile, of civilized and savage, of Christian and Moslem and Pagan. Has not somebody who knows said, "The very heathen would condemn the irreverent ways sometimes seen in Christian congregations"?

### XII. FALSEHOOD.

As to the blameworthiness of particular instances of wilful falsehood, there would be different judgments. The matter of motives and circumstances occasions perplexity. But as to the general obligation to veracity, few people among us would have any doubt. Show us a man whose word can never be trusted under any circumstances; who plays "fast and loose" with all contracts, oral or written; whose notes, bonds, and oaths create no presumption that he will speak the truth, and there are mighty few people who would think well of him. A Patagonian who never saw a missionary, nor wants to see one, would condemn the outrageous liar about as swiftly as would a trading, banking, business-doing Londoner. Once in a while such a man is actually found, and found out. Then nobody trusts him. Nobody believes a word that he says *because* he says it. His most solemn declarations go for nothing. "Who says it?" "X—— says it."

"Oh, X—— says it, does he!" and the people shrug their shoulders and exchange knowing looks between themselves and quietly discount the whole story. Who is willing to be called a liar? Give a man that name and you might as well smite him in the face. He will find it hard work to forgive you. He knows that everybody despises the notorious liar.

"All liars shall have their part in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone," says the Christian religion. So, substantially, say all the religions. Lying is almost universal out of Christendom and quite too common within it, and yet no heathen is heathen enough to stand up for it in general, especially in the gross forms of slander and perjury. A man calls heaven to witness that he will speak the truth, invokes its displeasure if he does not, and then proceeds to—lie. Is this right? Where is the sacred book that says that? Where the government that does not condemn and, if possible, punish perjury?

An avalanche of untruthfulness affecting all human intercourse, making human testimony always and everywhere wholly unreliable, would be deprecated the wide world over. Unless truthfulness were accepted as the law, all deviations from it would lose their seeming use. If lying itself could get no credence, what would be the use of

lying? Its seeming use in certain cases comes from a belief that it is *not* lying. Do not men everywhere instinctively feel that it is better and safer for society that men act on the rule of "Let every man speak the truth with his neighbor," rather than on the opposite rule of "Let every man speak falsehood to his neighbor as much as may suit his convenience"? Suppose these two rules embodied in the persons of two men set side by side—one having no reverence at all for the truth and never to be depended on to speak it, and the other a man of utter veracity who always means what he says, whose exactness of speech is proverbial, who will not stoop to deceit, who paints and distorts nothing, who would not knowingly for any consideration swerve one hair's breadth from actual fact even in the heat of argument, to whom the exact truth is something sacred, whose promise is sure performance, whose word is better than most men's bonds, who hates and scorns a lie, who "swears to his own hurt and changes not"—in short, who after the manner of Another is truth itself. Has the moral sense any difficulty in choosing between these two? The heart of humanity bows low before that better and right manly man. "It is GRAND, that way of his," says the universal conscience, and rings out enthusiasm from all her belfries.

## XIII. STEALING.

Leaving out of view all perplexed cases (as when a man steals to satisfy his soul when hungry) and considering only such as tower above all fogs and clouds, what is the general verdict of mankind on dishonesty in dealing with the property of others? Suppose a man whose habit is thievery, who will on opportunity steal your handkerchief, your pocket-book, or your railroad; to whom the only question is, Can it be done without too much risk? and this being answered affirmatively, he is ready to rob a henroost, to turn highwayman, to swindle the bank or Government, to sweep the seas as a pirate. He has no respect to any rights of property save his own. Nothing keeps his hands off his neighbor's lands or store or strong-box but a selfish prudence. There is no barrier between him and the utter beggary of all the rest of mankind but distance and the sense of danger. What seems honesty sometimes is merely regard to self-preservation. Give him a safe opportunity and he will steal a penny or a crown, rob a till or a sepulchre, as may suit his convenience. Is such a man ever actual? No matter. He is at least possible.

Now set down such a man in any country and confront him with its religion, however debased.

Will he find himself approved? Confront him with its laws; have they nothing to say against him? Confront him with its public opinion; will that say to him, "Oh, excellent man!"? The public consider him a public nuisance. He is a standing threat to every man who has anything to lose. People who can see anything can see that if such a rogue is right, others have no rights; that if every one is allowed to devote himself to preying on the goods of his neighbors without restraint, society is resolved into a fighting chaos of Ishmaelites. No; that unprincipled thief would get condemnation, and nothing but condemnation, the world over. Especially if set in sharp contrast with the opposite sort of a man: for example, with a man who, if left alone in a mint, would sooner take a live coal into his pocket than a penny; who does not even allow himself to covet what does not belong to him; who is so above suspicion of dishonesty that were one to charge it upon him the charge would fall flat as the walls of Jericho, nay, would rebound on the accuser.

"Incredible!" say the people. "This is the man who during a long life has kept his hands clean as a babe's. Millions of public money and trust funds have passed through them and not a farthing has stuck. Widows and orphans have left their little all with him and have felt and

found it perfectly safe. The vagueness and technicalities of laws have given him many a chance of enriching himself safely at the expense of others, but the old Roman has never used one of them, nor even *thought* of doing so. Several times dictator, Fabricius is to-day driving his team a-field poor as ever. So fearful has he been of taking a single denarius that did not belong to him that it has always been his practice in cases of doubt to give his neighbor the benefit of the doubt. The goods and chattels of other people are as safe in his hands as if stored away on Olympus—safer. Some Diogenes searching with his lantern for an honest man has at last found him."

Stand this man by the side of his opposite in any country or age and ask the consciences of men to choose between them. Do any doubt what the choice would be? Not unless the judge be a reprobate or a "philosopher." The common man, even though a benighted heathen, would speak like a flash, if not like thunder, in behalf of the grand old-fashioned honesty. The voice within him would echo the voice of the laws and the voice of the religions. He knows whom he would like to have for a neighbor. He knows who would be the blessing and who the bane of society. He knows that a world made up of unscrupulous thieves, highwaymen, defaulters, pi-

rates would be an intolerable institution. Dishonesty would grapple with dishonesty, thief would clutch the throat of thief, pirate would board and sack and murder pirate, and the old, worn-out, tortured planet would boil and toss and shriek for—ANNIHILATION.

## XIV. SINS AGAINST THE FAMILY.

The Bible gives the family a divine warrant. It appoints separate households, husbands and wives bound together for life, parents and children owing to one another certain specified duties. Parents must be loving and faithful to each other, and must love, support, and properly train their children. The children must honor and obey their parents; must, as instinct prompts, be specially tender and helpful to one another. Such is the ideal towards which the members of a family must strive, under the limitations of common sense and of a paramount obligation to God. Fornication and adultery are denounced. Promises and curses press towards the fulfilment of marital, parental, and filial duties.

The family is practically universal in the world. Its bonds are looser in some places than in others, but everywhere society is distributed into those little social islands which we call families. Everywhere the common law, and statute

law also if such exists, demand marital fidelity. Adultery is disgraceful and punishable—often punished with the utmost severity. Both laws and public opinion hold parents bound to cherish and provide for their children till they are able to care for themselves. On the other hand, children are subjected to their parents, whom they are bound to love and honor as well as obey. As we gaze backward through the historic centuries we find these fundamental laws existing in all barbarous as well as civilized countries. Sometimes relaxations are made in favor of the powerful, various modifications arise from the weakness or depravity of the times; but through all the fog of disturbing and distracting forces we see the deepest convictions of mankind trying to point in the direction of family purity, family government, and family love—as the needle, subject to various distractions, is always found struggling towards the pole. Communism is plainly not the natural law of mankind, if it is of the brutes.

Does the moral sense of mankind echo its creeds, laws, and customs? It is not unnatural to suppose that these grew out of the human conscience, or, what practically comes to the same thing, out of the easy perception on the part of all men that society could not long stand the strain of the opposite household principles.

But let us see how the individual would be affected by showing him in the concrete, a full-blown specimen of disregard of what we have called the family duties. Here he is—a communist in the grossest sense, a scoffer at the sanctity of all family ties, from the beginning a disobedient son, disrespectful, turbulent, rebellious, defiant, a household tempest—all without provocation, and even against a most wise and tender parentage. Then, breaking away from the home which he has made wretched, he gives himself up to the brute within him. He turns seducer. He ruins innocence as widely as he can. He descends to her whose guests are in the depths of hell. There is no paradise of purity and honor which he is not ready to break into and desolate. At last he has the effrontery to ask some woman to be his wife; and, such is the supreme insanity of even some good women, she consents. Poor creature! Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots? The spots grow larger on that spotted man. Fornication is exchanged for adultery. The new ties go the way of the old ones—into the ditch. His home is drenched in tears and shame. His children come into the world blotched and scarred with his vices. Alas!

Now let us capture this brute with his whole history, and carry him about the world for exhibi-

tion as a showman might some monster. What would the world say to him? Where is the community, in this age or in any other, that would want him for a citizen, where the family that would want him for a member or a guest? What husband or father or brother whose secret heart would not declare war against him? As to such a man being morally approved by any intelligent person between the poles and this side of the judgment (always excepting reprobates and "philosophers"), the idea is preposterous. He sees at a glance that if society should come to be made up of such people it would *not* be "a little heaven below."

The general condemnation would be emphasized if we could show by the side of that rotten man his moral opposite. Well, here he is—taken at random from thousands of Christian saints whose names are not in the calendar. And we beg pardon of the white-hearted and white-handed man for standing him up, though it be but for comparison sake, by the side of such a thorough-paced scoundrel of a Nubian. Now look at these two men whose different habits and histories are written even in their faces—look, we say, thou Hottentot, thou Patagonian, thou old Accadian or present Mormon! Nothing to choose between them? The one as praiseworthy as the

other—that monster of which the world cannot have too little, and this saint of which it cannot have too much; that rotten man whose stench perhaps crosses continents and oceans and centuries, and this clean man, this healthy soul, this incarnate sanitary commission whose breath sweetens every breeze that passes him, this man from whose eye chastity herself looks forth with the majesty of a queen or a goddess, this man whose very thoughts are whiter than snow! No, human nature was too soundly built for that. The space between Scipio the continent and Appius the decemvir was no trifle, and was easily noted by the old Romans: that between our two specimen men (neither of whom is an imaginary character) is planetary, and visible by all mankind. For we make no account of a few reprobates and "philosophers." Mankind at large can easily see that a world overrun with such men as Sextus Tarquinius would be too unclean to be inhabitable until swept with the besom of destruction.

### XV. IMPENITENCE.

That one who has done wrong ought to be sorry and to amend is a piece of knowledge universally possessed. The Bible demands repentance as a condition of forgiveness. So do all re-

ligions. Some count that to be sinful which others do not; but they all agree that whatever *is* sinful should be regretted and put away. For example, those particulars of character and conduct considered in this chapter. All creeds and nations say that these things are wrong—which is the same thing as saying that they ought to be hated, regretted, and forsaken. Show them a man practising them all, and yet looking back on his practice with positive satisfaction, and forward with a resolute determination to repeat the sins with even greater force, and they would consider him as adding a new sin to his list. Would not any man consider an offence against himself as aggravated by a like impenitent attitude? He might feel able to pardon the penitent offender without much difficulty; but if he saw the sinner to be altogether without compunction and bent on repeating the injury without limit, he would find the difficulty greatly increased.

# XI. REALIZATION.

Οὐ ταὐτὸν εἶδος φαίνεται τῶν πραγμάτων πρόσωθεν ὄντων ἐγγύθεν θ' ὁρωμένων. EURIPIDES.

The appearance of things is not the same when seen far off and close at hand.

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Heu miseri! bona qui quærunt sibi semper et optant,
Divinam tamen hanc communem et denique legem,
Nec spectare oculis, nec fando attendere curant.
CLEANTHES.

Wretched people! who are always desiring and seeking goods, but are at no pains to, as it were, see with their eyes and hear with their ears that primary divine truth which is common to all mankind.

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For he endured as seeing Him who is invisible.
ST. PAUL.

# XI. REALIZATION.

LET us inquire what would happen if men would duly ponder, and so come to *realize* to themselves, the great elementary religious truths common to all nations and ages and creeds.

Of course it would ennoble the whole strain of their thoughts and feelings. Dealing with great ideas tends to give breadth to our whole spiritual nature. If a man wants to make himself little—his understanding, his will, his heart—let him confine his attention to little objects; let his thoughts travel over and over perpetually some narrow round of trifling ideas and occupations. A Newton could become a child under such a process. On the other hand, the child tends to become a Newton under that process reversed. The great thoughts gradually crowd outward the narrow boundaries of the understanding; the great conceptions gradually expand the mind in the direction of great resolves and great emotions. So the frontiers are pushed abroad in every direction, and the pigmy at last becomes, it may be, a giant.

Now no man in his senses will deny the great-

ness and majesty of those primary religious ideas which we have found to be practically universal in the world. Take, for example, the idea of human immortality. Is it a fact that we are IMMORTAL beings—not some of us, but all of us; not the worthiest and finest human natures only, but the unworthiest and coarsest as well? What really make humanity—the souls that quicken and reign in these countless man-forms the world over—are started forth on a long, long career, one so long that its end cannot be descried from any summit that the universe contains. It sweeps away beyond the traditional threescore and ten. It sweeps away beyond the remotest hearse, funeral, and sepulchre. It sweeps away beyond centuries, beyond the lifetime of nations, beyond the lifetime of dispensations and chronologies and astronomies. It crosses the whole breadth of an eternity to come. This is not a dream, vague and illusory, that visits the couch of the restless sleeper. It is not an idle fancy with which poets and theorists have seen fit to embellish their works. Among the many fables that have come down to us under the name of history or philosophy or science is not to be reckoned the world-wide doctrine—*man lives for ever*. It is *fact*.

And one of the greatest of facts. This living for ever is no trifle. This outlasting the stars and

abysmal time itself is nothing less than an astounding thing. Especially does it look at us, the actual heirs of this prodigious inheritance, with a face of inexpressible grandeur. Open your eyes widely, O friend! *You* will never die—you who will soon be sick and buried and seen no more, and who will be universally said to be dead—*you* will never die. The ages will come and go without end; but as they come and as they go they will always see you somewhere; not you in ruins, not your remains, but the same living and conscious being that you now are, without a single break in the continuity of your existence from the first. Is not this something to think of? Does it not profoundly concern you? Might you not reasonably be counted insane if you should toss this great fact aside among the rubbish of your thoughts and forget it?

But the great fact of human immortality is only one of a group of kindred facts consented to by all mankind. Put the great things together and we have a group which, if duly considered and *realized* to our thought as facts, cannot but go far to moderate our sensibility to merely temporal conditions and experiences. The philosophers have long told us that we lay too much stress on such matters. Religious people had told us the same thing before. And if it is a fact, as all

creeds affirm, that there is a God above us, that we are on our way to his judgment-seat, and that our condition for an immortality will depend on the characters we form and the way in which we behave during this life—then it is absurd for us to feel towards the pains and the pleasures, the successes and reverses, of this transient scene as we are apt to do. Why, O friend, are you so much depressed at mere worldly ill-success or so elated at worldly good-success? Why do you make so much of worldly hardships and pains on the one hand, and so much of worldly conveniences and pleasures on the other? Why are you so dazzled by mere earthly greatness and so scornful of mere earthly littleness? Small occasion have you for it—as you will feel if you will only face realizingly that mighty for ever of yours that is now in the process of being saved or lost. What matter the ups and downs of this brief world in the presence of the interminable next? Of what account is riches or poverty, a throne or a huckster's stall, renown or obscurity, to one so tremendously circumstanced? He has only to confront as a sinner an endangered everlasting and his pyramid dwindles to a single grain of sand. It is now easy for him to be a stoic. The sensibility that used to flame so fiercely after these momentary advantages of the present is quieted. These are

not main things. They are the smallest of things to such a being as himself—why should he make much ado about these nothings?

The same vivid conception of the endless existence to which we are destined (especially as shone upon by the other universal beliefs that have been dwelt upon) which goes to moderate our naturally undue interest in merely temporal matters goes to enhance our interest in all matters specially related to the soul and its preparation for the future. No creed supposes that the fate of men after death will be determined by their worldly fortunes. One may have the highest place here and the lowest place there. Lazarus and Dives may exchange places in changing worlds. It is what we are as spiritual beings; it is how we behave in whatever conditions here befall us, which is universally supposed to determine what will be the allotments after death. Forgiveness of sin must be had; a certain style of character must be won; some scheme of duty must be conscientiously walked by. This has always been understood to be the essential stepping-stone to final happiness. Now if in some way this fact becomes intensely real to us; if the supreme Lawgiver, his government, his will, his judgment-seat, his awards of eternal life and death according to deeds done in the body, come and stand

before us as large as life, and lay hand upon us and look with all their might into our startled eyes—is it not plain what will happen? While the body and its concerns will retreat, the immortal soul and its concerns will come to the front. Duty, the favor of the Supreme, the methods of gaining and preserving that favor, all possible helps to these ends and to a penitent, conscientious life, will seem of first-class consequence. Instead of seeming as they do to most men—as things to be postponed to everything else, things to be set aside and sacrificed to almost any petty convenience and mood—they will seem first things instead of last, primaries instead of satellites, the very substance and marrow of our welfare instead of its refuse outermost parings. As the miser gloats on the gleam of his gold, as the ambitious man kindles at a vision of fames and thrones, as a mourner fastens greedy eyes on the sacred gifts and other mementoes of the dear departed, as the enthusiastic artist or poet devours with rapt and glowing face some vision of beauty in stone or canvas or song, so, after having looked our wonderful and inalienable dower of immortality in the eye till it has magnetized us into sympathy with itself, and that mighty hereafter, with its universally recognized prerequisites and awards, has come to seem to us as real as our own breath-

ing, living, conscious selves, we turn to look at the soul that is to occupy and consume those eternal years, and at the penitent, conscientious living here which alone prepares for that majestic lifetime, and at everything fitted to help us in this great preparation, it is with eager and hungry eyes that see in them an inestimable value.

But we do not stop here. Realization means work. A vivid sense of the supreme value of the soul's interests naturally carries with it such solid efforts in their behalf as are not put forth for anything else—efforts to know duty, efforts to resist temptation, efforts to carry out in practice the law written in the heart and in whatever sacred oracles, efforts to lead a life that will bear the scrutiny of an honest conscience and of a searching judgment-day that may come to-morrow, efforts to utilize whatever helps may exist for securing such a life. Is prayer one of these helps? Then I will watch unto prayer. Is public worship a help? Then I will be at pains not to forsake the assembling in sanctuaries. Are sacred days and sacred books helps? Then I will sacredly keep and study them. Are the prayers and counsels of others helps; also my own intercessory prayers and counsels that react on myself? Then I will both bespeak them and give them. I will be very busy in seeking first the kingdom

of God and his righteousness, according to my honest understanding of these things. I will be a day-laborer at this if at nothing else. Trifles shall not daunt me. I will not be afraid of discomforts and sacrifices. Whatever crosses lie in the way to crowns I will take up. For I have not only consented to certain things, but I have pondered them and pondered them till they have come to seem *real*. The shadows have become substance. Faith is turned to sight. The religious facts affirmed by all nations glow on my eye with all the hues of life, and I *behold* them as I do the mountains and stars. Beholding what a great, great hereafter awaits my own soul and what perils threaten it, I not only take kindly the exertions of friends in my behalf, but I proceed to second those exertions with my own. If I see any strait gate to be entered, I strive to enter it. If any way of working out my own salvation with fear and trembling presents itself, I at once set myself to work. Realizing that the same great endangered hereafter which belongs to me belongs to every member of my family, I am thankful for all judicious efforts in their behalf from any quarter, but must decline to content myself with them; I must myself labor with both hands to yoke the saved immortalities of my children with my own. Having come to be profoundly alive to the fact

that my neighbors and countrymen and foreigners to the world's ends are responsible beings on their brief way to judgment and its eternal awards, I not only justify various enterprises to enlighten and rouse and save them, but I feel impelled by the humane instinct to join these philanthropic laborers with such working forces as I possess. I too will give and pray and speak. How can I do otherwise, having before me the absolute deathlessness of every human being and his limited probation—not as an hypothesis, a mythology, a speculation, an opinion, but as a solid and pictured reality that knocks in thunder at the gate of every sense! So it would be with every man, on Christian or on heathen ground, who, accepting the doctrines of natural religion, should proceed to clothe them with the flesh and blood of realizing thought.

And this is the same thing as saying that a vivid realization of what men have universally believed in morals and religion would reconstruct the whole plan and tenor of life of most people; for with most people the religious truths which they intellectually accept are scarcely more than a shadow. They accept a God, but their lives proceed as if there were no God. They admit the supreme importance of the soul, but they live almost exclusively for the body. They confess

that men are sinful and responsible and endangered, but they do not trouble themselves on that account. They say that man is immortal, but, to look at them, one would think that death ends all. They tell us that the present life is of no account compared with the future, but we can see with half an eye that their thoughts and zeal are mainly expended on things that wholly belong this side of the grave; can see that the narrow present, with its food, its dress, its houses, its shops, its acres, its honors, its pleasures, is completely victorious over their doctrine of another and endless life. What is the matter? Why are the beliefs so inoperative? Is it because they are not genuine? We may not say that, for we find the same incongruity in cases of absolute knowledge—as when men know to a dead certainty that they may die at any moment and yet act as if assured of life for years to come. No, let us grant that these self-contradicting men really believe what they say; but the truths they possess occupy only the remote corners and backgrounds of thought. They are distant, they are shadowed. Other objects intervene and supervene. The Lazarus lies strengthless in his tomb; but roll away the stone, bid the dead man come forth, unbind him and take away the hiding wraps. Now look at him, all ye startled bystanders! See, he is an alto-

gether different thing from what he was! The dead is plainly alive. What fires of expression and force in eye and features! He who lately could do nothing can now do much. Now he can go abroad among men and act upon them. It would not be strange if by reason of him many should go away and believe on Jesus.

Revitalize the dead truths of natural religion; bring them to the front and set them in the full blaze of the sun; fasten steady, if startled, eyes on the unmuffled and gigantic forms until you have fully drunk in their hugeness and majesty, and lo, you are new men! The old could not stand the revelation. The great facts which you have vitalized have in return vitalized you. They have looked you in the eye, have spoken to you with potential voices, have roughly shaken you and said, *Up and live while you may, you who are to live for ever!* And you obey. New forces start into being, and the old wheel about a full semi-circle. A new character and way of living begin. You are born again. You have at last come to REALIZE that there is a worshipful God above us who marks our ways, who hears our prayers, who reveals his will, who will call us to account, who has dowered us with immortality, who will pardon our sins if repented of in this world, otherwise never; and so you have made up your minds to

live *as if* all these things are true. A heathen, so influenced, would do the same.

Another result of realizing these truths would be a profound conviction of the guilt and inexcusableness of even the heathen; for we would realize how much light they have and might have, and how much they might make of it. We would say, Surely God is far from having left himself without a witness, even at the ends of the earth and in the darkest times. The people who know of supreme Deity and his activity in human affairs, who recognize the use and obligation of prayer and other forms of worship, to whom the great facts of human responsibility and immortality are alphabetical, who understand the probationary character of our present life and the possibility of pardon for sinners through repentance and expiation, and who know also the sinfulness of such things as hostility or indifference to all religion, practical atheism, unconscientiousness, selfishness, uselessness, ingratitude, returning evil for good, cruelty, profanity, lying, stealing, impurity, and other offences against both God and man—such people can hardly be said to be poorly furnished with the principles and rules of good living. Nay, they are richly furnished. Whether by a primitive divine revelation or by native insight, or by both—somehow essential religious truth has

come to their souls somewhat after the free and impartial fashion in which air and light have come to their bodies. The Decalogue has been written into their hearts more deeply than it ever was into tables of stone. To have so many just views, to know so well what are sins and to see such great motives against them, is to have great light.

Do they use the light? Do they avoid the sins? Do they repent of them when committed? This is an appeal to actual observation and history, and one that brings a very unsatisfactory answer. The account given in our Scriptures of the moral condition of the old Canaanites applies substantially to all the historic heathen peoples. Paul's testimony as to what the best of them were in his day agrees perfectly with the picture of the Roman world as given in excavated Pompeii and Herculaneum, in the satires of Persius and Juvenal, in the epigrams of Martial, and in the histories of Tacitus and Suetonius and Dion Cassius. As to what the heathen now are, respectable travellers and Christian missionaries are sadly agreed. The picture is a revolting one—the picture one end of whose mighty canvas touches us and the other Adam. The whole world lieth in wickedness. All the generations have fallen. With the overwhelming majority their religious knowledge

is practically uninfluential. They neither avoid known sins nor repent of them when committed. Their theory is vastly better than their practice. So Paul condemns them. So their own creeds and governments condemn them. So they are condemned by just heaven. Doubtless they are never condemned for things which they neither know nor can know to be wrong. But, as we have seen, their darkness is so riddled by the shafts of light, they hold so much "truth in unrighteousness," that there must be many counts in the indictment against them at a judgment-day which they are all expecting. Doubtless that day will go hard with them. Extenuations may be pleaded, but nothing more. More could be pleaded had the law within them been written with invisible ink, and then for the first time brought out to view by the "fire that tries every man's work, of what sort it is." But, since from the very beginning that imperative Writing has been flaming out to all observers in every language under heaven, alike in tropic heat and Arctic cold, we can only sadly say, as does the Bible, "WITHOUT EXCUSE."

Indeed, it may well be claimed that they would be without excuse if they possessed only a small part of their present religious knowledge—say, if you please, knowledge of only a single point of duty. For, if they would conscientiously

do that one duty, that very act, according to both Bible and natural law, would open to them door after door of religious knowledge and attainment. Conscientiousness would beget conscientiousness. Light well used would lead to light. And so at last all the religious essentials would be reached.

That this is the natural order of things does not admit of question. It is a law of nature that finite faculties of all sorts, from those of the humblest plant up to those of man, strengthen by suitable use. Even the mosses and seaweeds must flourish in the exercise of such active powers as they possess. The unused limbs of the Hindoo devotee, that once grew in size and power as he wrought and walked like other people, began to fail from the day he set himself up by the wayside as a motionless pillar, and now they are hardly more than sticks. "Use eyes and have them," says the old adage as well as the eyeless fishes in the great Kentucky cave. Give any one of your senses nothing to do, and it will not only do nothing, but will in time lose the power to do anything. Organs can even be extirpated in the course of generations by lack of use, or improved to almost any extent by a long course of judicious practice. So of the mental powers. If we want our memories to grow strong we must entrust them with something to keep—give them some-

thing to do. We must practice at reasoning if we would be good reasoners, at judging if we would be good judges, at studying Nature if we would be good scientists.

And the same law holds in religious matters. Our conscientiousness and ability to perceive moral and religious truth improve by use and weaken by neglect. Experience shows that there is no way of getting new light so sure and fruitful as that of using the light we already have—no way so sure to harden conscience and weaken its power to discern between good and evil as that of neglecting to obey the moral sense so far as it has clearly spoken to us. Yonder man now denies the fundamental principle of morals; and he acts accordingly, so far as it seems safe to do so. Has he always been in these depths of darkness and profligacy? By no means. He has sunk gradually in the process of abusing the light with which he started in life. As a child his views and feelings were quite different from what they now are. But one day he smote his moral sense squarely in the face. He did it again and again. As fast as he advanced in sin so fast he retreated from the primary religious truths, till at last they all disappeared in the distance like so many expiring stars; and his ignorance and his wickedness became complete together.

Another man reverses this process. He begins near where the other leaves off—that is to say, with hardly more than a single ray of light; so bad are his heredity and early surroundings. But at length he made a conscientious start in the way of using his single ray. This led to other rays and a more robust conscientiousness. So finally the little became much. His consciousness being witness, this was how it happened. He was like a man so far within a cave that only a feeble glimmer betrayed where it opened into day; but he set his face towards the spark, he began to move towards it; as he moved the light grew and his step became quicker and firmer, until at last he stands at the cave's mouth and sees the sun.

This is the natural way of all religious advance, whether in knowledge or goodness. It is a very reasonable way. Experience being witness, it is a very successful way. And certainly it is the way taught in the Bible. The Book gives us to understand that God, if need be, will come to the help of natural law, and will see to it that the light that is used shall be the light that grows. To him that hath shall be given. Two talents well employed shall become five. It is not the largeness of our stewardship, but our good behavior in it, that draws divine favors. Even as some wealthy human father who sees his son managing

well a small capital will gladly put more into his hands, so will do the wealthy Heavenly Father. This is what he is said to have done to Cornelius. The centurion was devout and exemplary on the basis of very scanty knowledge; so God gave him ampler capital. And God will treat other heathen in the same large way if they will conscientiously set about the single duty which, by supposition, they happen to know. Infancy is the state that specially needs help. What should we think of a father who should decline to do anything for his child till he had ceased to be a child? That sort of kindness that stands ready to help one just as soon as he no longer needs help (a very common sort among men) is not of the most magnificent sort, nor is it such as we are taught to expect from God. He does not despise the day of small things. Instead of breaking the bruised reed and quenching the smoking flax, he does all he can to strengthen and kindle. He does not stand aloof till the moral infant has become the full-grown man, till the whisper has broadened into thunder, till the snail-pace has quickened into the pace of a giant or a planet; but, as every true friend does, he steps in with his help when help is most needed—at the rough and struggling beginnings of a new life. He will tenderly support those first feeble steps in the narrow way. Nay, he will

take the lambs in his arms and carry them in his bosom. He will do the best he can to cherish the spark into flame, the dawn into day, the almost death into vigorous life. Does he not run to meet returning prodigals?—will he not meet them afar off, as far as China and the Antarctic? In every nation he that feareth God and worketh righteousness (such as is known to him) is accepted. In every land to do God's will (as far as known) is to know of the doctrine. All over the world honest beginners in the right way shall have doors opened before them which no man can shut, and shall go from strength to strength. To the upright, on however small a scale, light shall arise in their darkness, and they that are faithful in that which is least will have an opportunity to be faithful also in much, and will improve the opportunity.

This, then, is what we can be sure of in the case of any heathen. Supposing him to know but a single duty, if he would conscientiously set himself to perform that duty he would receive light on other points, and the same conscientiousness that led him to do right at first would lead him to do right again; then there would be a still further increase of light followed by a still further enlargement of obedience. So, step by step, he might come to almost any stage of knowledge and virtue.

Just as by entering a house by any one door all of its many rooms become accessible, and will in course of time actually be entered if permanent residence is proposed, so whoever enters the kingdom of God at a single point of duty acquires the freedom of the whole palace, and in time will liberally use his freedom.

And here, too, we have Ariadne's thread. However far one may be in the mazes of the dreadful labyrinth of error and sin, he has only to draw on some single thread of duty and follow its leadings carefully in order to find his way out into light and safety. Many a man has escaped something worse than a Minotaur in this way.

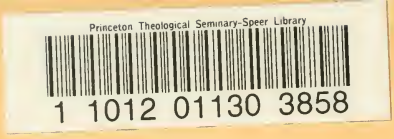
What is this but the common way of mounting to high places by a flight of steps? One is at the base of the tower; but he wants to be at the summit where the air is pure, where the light is strong, and where the prospect is glorious. He does not hope to pass the whole intervening space at a leap; but he can easily pass it by a succession of small upward movements. He has only to mount the first brief step, and then the second equally brief, and so on till the ascent is completed and his horizon is wonderfully enlarged. All that is needed is a starting with a clear purpose to advance as the way opens. And this is the case of the heathen. All that they need in order

to rise to heights of grace and illumination is to take a single conscientious step in duty with an honest purpose to advance as the way may open. Is not a man inexcusable who will not do as much as this?

It is night. From the dark country a man is groping his way to his city home. At length he descries a single light and makes his way to it. High on its pillar blazes the first street lamp. By its aid he reads the neighborhood, takes his bearings, and is able to advance to another lamp. So one lamp introduces another, until finally he gets safely to his home—his brilliantly illuminated home that is waiting to receive him to all manner of comfort and rest. Under the circumstances his success was assured from the moment he began to guide his steps by that first lamp. Further advance was provided for by the city authorities that had graded and paved the streets, set up guide-boards at all corners, sent out on their beats watchmen who must answer all reasonable questions; above all, set up that cordon of flaming lamps at just intervals. Time would be needed, open eyes would be needed, patient and perhaps tiresome walking would be needed; but he was now fully within the embrace of a great system of aids which, supposing in him a real disposition to use them, would surely bring him to his destination. So any heath-

en, starting out on a conscientious course at any one point of duty, will be sure to be brought on homeward towards the heart of the great city of truth. It may be in part by natural law; it is sure to be in part by the immediate agency of Him who has said of himself, "Good and upright is the Lord; therefore will he teach sinners in the way." But by this means or by that, or by both, he who seeks shall find, and he who knocks shall find an open door. Must he knock as if with a battering-ram? Must he call with an earthquaking voice, as only some broad-chested Christian saint can call? Do not believe it. *Sincerity* will set earth and heaven in motion for his help. This we may confidently expect from Him who willeth not that any should perish, who is Father enough to be glad of an opportunity to befriend his children.

I ask again, Is not the heathen without excuse who, knowing only a single point of duty, declines to make even a *beginning* in the way of conscientious living?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